

WISH EDUCATION: WHO'S CHANGING THINGS?

LEVEL
ONE

LILITH

THE INDEPENDENT JEWISH WOMEN'S MAGAZINE SPRING 1994, V. 19, N. 1 \$4.00

OUR DREAMS

Interpreting Jewish Dreams
Two Dancers Live Their Dreams
Orthodox Feminists Dream On

OUR NIGHTMARES

Breast Cancer—How Risky Is It to Be Jewish?
Facing Widowhood

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JOIN LILITH'S JEWISH WOMEN'S TALENT BANK!

Too often, the media and Jewish organizations do not know how to access the expanding pool of Jewish women who have expertise in fields ranging from AIDS to Zionism. LILITH is developing annotated files on women who can serve as lecturers, resources, programming specialists and scholars. Such activities have always been a part of LILITH's mission. For the past 18 years LILITH has functioned as a national resource center on Jewish women's issues for individuals, organizations and the media, both Jewish and general.

When we have your material on file, we will be able to use it in answering queries we receive from the press, from conference planners in the Jewish community, and from other nonprofit organizations.

Underwritten in part by the Nathan Cummings Foundation, LILITH's Talent Bank is not a speakers bureau; it is a resource for the Jewish community, for nonprofit organizations and for the media.

Please fill in all applicable information. If you would like to suggest a woman for inclusion in LILITH's talent bank who is too modest, or too well known, to nominate herself, please send us her name and address with pertinent information. If you have heard a compelling speaker or know of any especially knowledgeable resource person, please recommend her.

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NOTE: Your area of expertise need not be specifically Jewish or feminist.

I am enclosing (please check all which apply):

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I am available (please check all which apply):

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☐ to be part of a think tank, task force, committee ☐ other (specify) _____

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Please return completed form to:

Jewish Women's Talent Bank, LILITH, Suite 2432, 250 West 57th Street, New York City, NY 10107.

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by Susan Rothbaum

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LILITH is named for the legendary predecessor of Eve who insisted on equality with Adam: "After the Holy One created the first human being, Adam, the Holy One created a woman, also from the earth, and called her Lilith. Lilith said: 'We are equal because we both come from the earth...'" (From The Alphabet of Ben Sira, 23a-b)

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NOTE: This first issue of LILITH in 1994, Volume 19 #1, is now labeled Spring. This season change accommodates our distributors and will not affect the number of magazines our subscribers receive; Winter 1994 will be V. 19 #4.

FROM THE EDITOR

I couldn't believe it. My eleven-year-old daughter arrived home from Hebrew school earlier this year carrying a new book *Introduction to Jewish History*; it was a nice-looking book with graphics that caught my eye, but what caught my consciousness was the fact that out of 125 pages of text and illustrations, there were only three illustrations featuring women: Sarah (looking adoringly at Abraham), Ruth (gleaning in a corner of the field and looking fetching) and two anonymous women sitting on the ground preparing food and ladling it out for a man standing above them! And this, folks, is 1994.

All the talk about Jewish identity and continuity, the subject for commissions and high-octane conferences across the continent this year, mostly overlooks the problem that girls and women (51% of the Jews) are made to feel excluded from much of Jewish life in subtle and blatant ways. Subtle (maybe): the marked paucity of positive images of females in Jewish texts—STILL! (You'd think more savvy publishers would have cashed in on the needs of feminist parents and educators by now) Blatant: the statistics on how few women are in leadership positions in the organized Jewish community; whether paid professionals or volunteers, women are still an underclass—only 7% of large city Jewish federations, according to a 1993 study, have women presidents, and not a single one has a woman executive director.

LILITH can't cure all ills (though we try)—but in 1994 we have taken on the

formidable and exciting task of repairing some of the damage to Jewish girls and women that these examples represent. With support from the Covenant Foundation, LILITH is undertaking a year-long project to discover and tell you about innovations in Jewish education for girls and women—a project we call in the LILITH office "Updating 'Women of Valor'." This exciting project intends to get out the word about feminist education initiatives—too often people interested in creating nonsexist programs, or feminist celebrations for learners of all ages don't yet know that there are models to look at and other educators to consult. In this issue, we profile three women educators, look at two unusual books for high school, college-age and adult learners in Kol Ishah, and describe some unusual educational ventures in Tsena-Rena. Watch for a special feature on Bat Mitzvah, coming up later this year, to which we hope many of you will want to contribute your own experiences and insights, and a report on the recent statistics on how Jewish education differs for boys and girls.

Let's hope—with millennial optimism—that by the year 2000 we can elevate the consciousness of book publishers, so that the next generation of Jewish females can come in from the margins of Jewish life (from the corners of the gleaning field) to its center.

Susan Weidman Schneider

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CALL FOR BAT MITZVAH MATERIALS

For an upcoming story on creative socially conscious, unusual, thoughtful, spiritual, feminist, or just plain tasteful Bat/Bar Mitzvah ideas—we'd like to know about you. If you have information relevant to our story, call or write to: Susan Schnur, LILITH, 250 West 57th Street, #2432, New York, 10107, (212)757-0818.

STATE VS. JEWISH DIVORCE

your article "Women Unbound" (Summer 1993), you state:

"New York State and Canada have passed legislation prohibiting civil divorce until the religious divorce has been obtained."

New York Domestic Relations Law 253 requires the plaintiff to swear that he or she has taken all steps solely within his or her power to remove any barrier to the defendant's remarriage following the divorce. Accordingly if it is the wife who is suing for divorce there is no requirement under New York State law for the defendant to do anything about a get.

In an effort to use economic persuasion, New York enacted, in 1992, amendments to Domestic Relations 236 which allow a court, where appropriate, to consider the effect of a barrier to remarriage in awarding money or distributing marital property.

The New York statutes do not refer specifically to the get, but they are worded in such a way that they are inapplicable to other religions. As an attorney, I frequently have to explain to my Christian clients why they must swear to affidavits which are irrelevant to them.

When Governor Cuomo signed the first version of the "get law," he noted in his memorandum the existence of constitutional questions. The inequities of Jewish laws as they are applied must be addressed within the Jewish community. There is a quickly reached limit to what civil law can do. I admit that there is an even more quickly reached limit concerning the extent to which non-Jews want civil law to intervene in religious concerns.

*Sandra W. Jacobson
New York City, NY*

BEARING FUR? NOT!

I eagerly reached for the Winter '93 issue of LILITH, assuming you were going to address the horrendous animal suffering behind every fur coat "Inheriting Fur." Instead, however, I felt you skirted the

issue, barely mentioning the historic ruling of one of Israel's Chief Rabbis that it is a violation of Jewish law to wear furs.

And the answer to your question of what's a daughter to do when she inherits one of these symbols of suffering? Oy! So, how could you have not thought of it? Cut it up in little pieces and donate it to an animal shelter. Orphaned puppies and kittens love to snuggle up in fur pieces; they remind them of their original owners, as they should each and every one of us.

*Jayn Brotman
Cincinnati, OH*

WHY CAN'T A WOMAN GIVE LIKE A MAN?

In response to "Jewish Women's Philanthropy - What Do We Need To Know?" [Winter 1993], I'd like to add an additional motivation for giving: There are certain charitable expectations from professionals in the workplace.

Professional women often don't have a clear understanding of these expectations. Women are clearly not cued into the rules of the "network," one of which is that you give not because you "feel good about it" or because "it is a good cause," phrases your respondents used to describe why they give, but because you are expected to give at a certain level, and that "giving appropriately" is one of the keys to professional advancement. As long as their giving is not commensurate with that of their male counterparts, women will be held back professionally.

The biggest question in Business and Professional Women's divisions of Jewish Federations is "Why don't professional women give commensurate to their male counterparts?" Candidly cluing women in to the rules of the network will help our goal of increased giving, as well as promoting career advancement and community leadership opportunities for women.

*Linda M. Reich, Pittsburgh PA
Director of the Business and
Professional Women's Division of
Pittsburgh*

WOMEN CANTORS—DEFINING "PROFESSIONALISM"

As Vice President and Membership Chair of the American Conference of Cantors (the Reform cantors' organization), as a graduate of the School of Sacred Music at Hebrew Union College- Jewish Institute of Religion, and as a woman, I would like to respond to Cantor Helen Leneman's article on the Women Cantors Network (Fall 1993.)

Cantor Leneman states that "bonding and networking in a small intimate group does not exist at larger and more impersonal conferences." Not only are women full and equal members of the ACC, we are also its leaders. Our current President, Cantor Vicki Axe, is a woman, as are three of the five officers, myself included. Over 50% of our Executive Board are women. Issues that we women face are dealt with both formally, in workshops and seminars, and informally, over lunch or on the phone. We feel that only in unity is there strength and growth.

Cantor Leneman refers to a "caste system" within the cantorate, separating out those who did not graduate from a cantorial school. Most of the members of the Women Cantor Network are not members of the ACC because our organization accepts as full members only graduates of the School of Sacred Music (Reform) or of the Cantor's Institute (Conservative). She states that the cantorate was, historically, a profession that was learned by apprenticing with another cantor. Many other professions—medicine, law, teaching and social work—also used to be apprenticed professions. They too now differentiate between those who are graduates of professional schools and those who are not. The School of Sacred Music and the Cantor's Institute have raised the academic credibility of the cantorate, given the cantor greater status in the Jewish community, providing high standards of cantorial scholarship and empowering women to be leaders of the Jewish community.

*Cantor Judith Kahan Rowland
New York, NY*

Barbie's Mom Speaks—An Interview With Ruth Handler

Teen Talk Barbie was the victim of grassroots political action in toy stores on both coasts this past holiday season, reports the *New York Times*. Performance artists bought Teen Talk Barbie and a boy doll of equally classic lineage, G.I. Joe, swapped their innards and replaced the dolls on the shelves. The result: the altered Barbie now barks, "Eat lead, Cobra!" while Joe chirps, "Let's go shopping!" And last year's talking Barbie, whose complaint that "math class is hard" caused a very negative response from parents and educators, had to be recalled for an attitude adjustment.

Talking dolls themselves aren't all that's been making Barbie news. The book *Mondo Barbie* (St. Martin's Press), an anthology of short stories and poems printed on bright pink pages, arrived at the LILITH office some months ago, with a memo from its publicist confessing that "My name is Lynn, and I owned a Barbie." A leitmotif of the book is biting Barbie's pointy, chewy little plastic feet.

LILITH decided, in the wake of all this Barbie news, to explore Barbie's origins with her mom—Ruth Handler of Los Angeles, a founder of Mattel toys in 1944, and the creator of the Barbie and Ken dolls in the late 1950's.

"The dolls are named for my own children, Barbie and Ken," Handler said in a telephone interview.

"Barbie used to love to play with paper dolls. We went to the dime store together each Saturday, and I noticed that she always chose teenage dolls, never baby dolls or children dolls, and she and her friends used to play for hours with the teenage dolls. I listened to how they would project their future with their dolls."

"Finally, when Barbara was too old to play with dolls—12 or 13—we took the

children to Europe. We were walking down a street in Lucerne and in the window of a toy store was a display of grown-up dolls with women's bodies. They were called "Lilly" from a European cartoon, and were wearing ski outfits. There were 4 or 5 different styles of ski outfits. I asked Barbara, 'Would you like one for your room—decoratively?' She had a hard time choosing which one she wanted. I asked if we could buy the costumes



"Solo in the Spotlight" Barbie and creator, Ruth Handler.

children separately and I got a "crazy American" reaction.

"In Vienna it was the same story with the Lilly doll—with a new ski outfit we hadn't seen in Switzerland. So I bought it for myself.

"Barbara never did get the dolls! I took

them to use as models for our people show what I meant by an adult teenage doll. The idea of a doll with breasts was not received well. Most of the buyers [in toy stores] were men, and some didn't think women would want their daughters to have a doll with breasts! And they themselves didn't want their daughters to have such a doll! But when we first shipped the dolls, they just walked off the shelves."

And what were parents' initial reactions to a doll with breasts?

"Parental politics never got in the way of their choices," says Handler. "A mother sees the play pattern the doll could provide for her daughter. It provides for millions and millions of little girls an important play experience; it gives a little girl the ability to dream about her future. A girl can interpret the adult world around her with this doll as a prop."

Handler and her husband ultimately sold Mattel, and in 1976 she started Nearly Me, a company making artificial breasts for women with breast cancer. ("My life seemed to be a series of going from breast to breast," she observes wryly.) "As soon as the women buyers for Nearly Me found out that I had created Barbie they raved. It surprised me. Barbie had a very very strong place in their growing up years.

What about the objections of many feminists that Barbie presents too idealized and unrealistic an image of women's

bodies—long, long legs, shortened torso, forever pointed for high-heeled shoes?

"When we first brought out Barbie I was very much against her being pretty or having distinctive personality. I understood the need for little girls to project themselves into their dreams. About femininity

criticism. I don't even respond to that. The fact that Barbie is so loved speaks for itself.

—Susan Weidman Schneider



Israeli Feminists Dramatize Violence Against Women

A bride with her arm in a sling and a black eye stands outside a Jerusalem market and gives a haunting warning to shoppers that marriage will not solve the problem of violence in a relationship, but instead it will exaggerate it. The bride is an actress and the wounds are fake, but the violence against women is a daily reality for hundreds of thousands of Israeli women. This demonstration was one of the many ways Israeli feminists observed The International Protest Against Violence Against Women held during the 16 days between November 25th and December 10th, 1993.

Because of Jewish religious law, Israeli civil law and the politically violent climate of the Middle East, Israeli feminists are struggling with several particular concerns. Many Israeli women report terrible fear when their husbands return from their mandatory army service with guns. Of the hundreds of women murdered by their husbands, partners or family members, most were killed in unusually cruel methods such as stabbing and strangling.

According to a survey conducted this year by a the respected Israeli company Geocartographia, approximately 14% of Israeli men believe that there are situations when men are entitled to beat women, and 7% of women agree. A majority of battered women who want a divorce are unable to get one because of religious law that stipulates that only the man may initiate a *get* [Jewish divorce—see LILITH Fall 1993]. As a result, many women are trapped in abusive marriages.

Women all over Israel organized protests. In Tel Aviv, WIZO held a conference on violence against women, and a coalition of women's organizations marched outside the homes of judges to protest the lenient treatment of men convicted of violence against women. In Haifa, a coalition made up of Woman to Woman, the Battered Women's Shelter, the Emergency Line for Sexual Abuse, Women Against Violence and *Al Panar*, the Arab Women's Movement had information stands in six different places in the city.

The Israel Women's Network together with other women's organizations, staged their demonstration—"A Market for Violence: Come But Buy Nothing"—inside



PHOTO BY SCOOP 80

An Israeli actress convinces the audience that marriage will not solve violence.

Ha'Mashbir, the main department store in Jerusalem, which loaned props and space.

The actresses from the group "Kafka's Orphans" warned against "buying violence." The bruised bride cautioned, "Don't buy violence while courting." Another actress, dressed as a man, told listeners "Don't buy any more of his apologies." She explained the apologies are part of a pattern of violence and do not guarantee behavioral change. A heavily clothed actress explained, "Don't buy the myth that rape is your fault" to a provocatively dressed mannequin. Surrounded by recent Israeli advertisements representing women as fruit, an actress slices produce and tells the audience, "Don't buy it that you are a piece of fruit."

(To learn more about these protests, and meet with Israeli feminists, contact: Israel Women's Network, PO Box 3171, Jerusalem 91031. Phone: 02-439966 Fax: 02-435976)

—Robin Beth Schaer

The Prophetess Miriam Hits Big at the Jewish Museum

Two years ago, LILITH commissioned potter Nissan Graham-Mayk to sculpt a "Cup of Miriam" to accompany a new feminist Passover ritual that celebrates the prophet Miriam [see LILITH, Spring 1992]. LILITH thought that Jewish women should have not only new rituals, but special *objets d'art* with which to surround them. Graham-Mayk's goblet is now included in a new permanent exhibit at the Jewish Museum in Manhattan, "Culture and Continuity: The Jewish Journey," which opened in June 1993.

Seeing the cup in the Museum "brought tears to my eyes," says Graham-Mayk. "It's overwhelming to see that the cup—representing a ritual in honor of a woman—has created its own place in our time."

Graham-Mayk continues to receive orders for the ceremonial goblet from around the country. A Rosh Chodesh group in Georgia used one at an 18-member women's seder last spring.

"A grassroots movement to include Miriam in her rightful place in the Passover story seems to be underway. I pray that Miriam's Cup will become a standard part of Passover seders to come," says Graham-Mayk,

—Marian Hershoff Gross

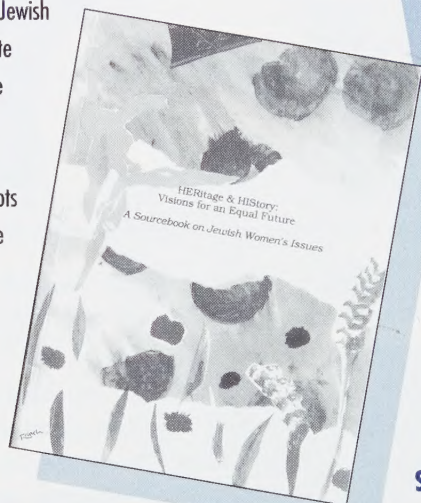


Nissan Graham-Mayk in her pottery studio.

HIStory or HERitage?

"Knowledge is power... In determining our vision for a common Jewish future we must consciously and actively encourage Jewish women to participate more in education—as our role models in leadership positions, experts in panel discussions, campus organizers and grassroots activists." These words introduce *HERitage and HIStory: Visions for an Equal Future*, a sourcebook on Jewish women's issues written and published by the Women's

Hillel's guide
for women's
campus



Program of World Union of Jewish Students. It is one of a number of innovative and compelling educational programs and resources created in the hopes that Jewish girls and young women will feel an incentive to remain in the Jewish community.

These two new books recognize that a key to effective Jewish education is making sure that it reflects the diverse history and community that Jews make up, including the voices of women, whose experiences have often been left out of mainstream Jewish education.

Sourcebook from the Women's Project of WUJS.

How to Celebrate Jewish Women

HERitage and HIStory: Visions for an Equal Future contains over 200 pages of program ideas, articles, Jewish texts, a women's seder, poetry and Rosh Chodesh services for each month of the Hebrew calendar, an extensive bibliography and resource list. This book can easily be used by adult education classes, campus organizations and Hebrew schools.

It begins with information about starting and leading a women's group. Each of the 14 chapters can be used as program topics for the group: "Abortion," "Israel" and "Dina and Tamar" among them. Each is introduced using both ancient Jewish texts and recent opinions. The next section of the sourcebook has chapters for each Jewish month, an explanation of the month and programming ideas for Rosh Chodesh celebrations.

To receive a copy of the sourcebook send \$20 to LILITH Magazine, 250 West 57th

Street, Suite 2432, NYC, NY 10107. (212) 757-0818. Please allow 6 weeks for delivery

More Celebrations

A Celebration of Jewish Women: A Hillel Program Guide for the Campus Community was designed to help college-age women and men develop programs on Judaism and women's issues.

The guide is based on information from campuses around the country collected by Lauren Eichler, a Princeton University senior and former intern at Hillel International Center in Washington D.C., who along with Ruth Fredman edited the guide. Many of these successful programs can be used as models, so that students don't have to reinvent the wheel when they want to create a study group, a Rosh Chodesh celebration, a feminist seder or a conference on Judaism and sexuality, to

give just a few examples of the scope of the guide. Eichler explains: "We hope the guide is a one-stop shopping service so that students may not only get help in programming events, but also be given a permanent reference book for future use."

Chapters in the guide include "Women's Groups," "Women Leaders," "The Female Body," and "Judaism and Feminism." Each section of the sourcebook contains analysis of the topic, models of programs and suggestions for further discussion. There's a helpful listing of agencies and publications for further learning and programming resources. The bibliography is a wealth of information for schools interested in arranging for scholars, academics and authors to come speak on campus.

To order A Celebration of Jewish Women call (202) 857-6560 or send \$20 to Hillel, 1640 Rhode Island Avenue NW, Washington DC 20036.

—Robin Beth Scheraga



Jewish women praying at the Western Wall.

Israeli Supreme Court Rejects Women of the Wall

In January 26, 1994, the Israeli Supreme Court turned down the petition of the women, who sought to pray aloud at the Western Wall. The petition was filed in 1989, by a group of mostly Orthodox women who had begun to pray together each Rosh Chodesh in the women's section at the Wall. The women sang aloud, wore prayer

shawls and read from the Torah, in the same fashion as the men on the other side of the low partition. They were harassed by fervently Orthodox groups, who claimed the women were violating Jewish law. The hostility culminated in a violent attack on the women in March 1989, when police were called to disperse the crowds with tear gas. The group continued to pray each month but was subject to a court order barring them from praying with a Torah and prayer shawls.

Despite the petition's rejection, the Women of the Wall claimed a partial victory. They pointed to the court's call for a government committee to investigate the matter and to find a way to balance the needs of all the worshippers at the Wall.

Miriam Isserow, the attorney for the Israel Women's Network, however, called the decision "very disappointing" and charged that it bowed to the demands of the ultra-Orthodox.

Rabbi Simha Meron, a lawyer and former director of Israel's rabbinical courts helped represent the Orthodox position in the case. He expressed confidence that the government committee would "find ways around" the women's claim that they have a right to pray the same way men do, which he said is "not according to *halacha* [traditional Jewish law]." —JTA

Hadassah Women Get Stoned

The day after the Israeli Supreme Court rejected the petition by women to pray aloud at the Wall, a group of American Hadassah board members praying at the Western Wall were stoned by some Orthodox worshipers and later were escorted away by police. The Hadassah women, unknowing of the court decision, had gone to the Wall with a Torah which stayed wrapped in a prayer shawl and on a table. One of the women wore a yarmulke and a prayer shawl.

According to Barbara Goldstein, a vice president of Hadassah, some of the ardently Orthodox women at the Wall began throwing stones and dirt and spitting at the Hadassah women, while both men and women

cursed them. Ultimately, the women were led away by police and guards from the Religious Affairs Ministry.

Ze'ev Rosenberg, director general of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, first charged the women were in "contempt of court." But when told they had not heard of the court's decision, he was surprised and referred to their action as a mistake.

It's a "crazy thing", Goldstein said, to come to Israel and be barred "from fulfilling the very thing you come to fulfill, the highest expression of Judaism." She said the issue will be taken up by the board of Hadassah, which includes women from all streams of Judaism and is based on religious pluralism. She said it is likely the organization would move to forge closer ties with Israeli women's groups.

—JTA

To support the work being done on behalf of the right of Jewish women to pray as a group, with Torah Scrolls contact the International Committee for Women at the Kotel (CWK) at Box 32856, Baltimore MD 21208. They need "your ideas, and especially your commitment, so that our generation may rise to the opportunity it has been granted. This is Jewish and Women's history-in-the-making. Come claim it as your own, share it with us."

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JEWISH

interpreting

Each woman has doors that lead into her Jewishness: Food, of course, and music; Torah study and *tikkun olam* ["repairing the world," or social activism]; being part of a Jewish community; celebrating holidays and lighting the Sabbath candles.

For me there has also been another, less well known door: The door of dreams. When I tell people that my adult reconnection with Judaism has been guided by Jewish dreams, they usually knit their foreheads, puzzled. But it's true. After thirty years of thinking that being a Jew wasn't important to me, it was dreams that led me to look again.

The first dream was of an old, bearded Jewish man, locked in a cage in the basement while a party went on upstairs. The second dream came soon after. I was with my grandfather, who was as confused as he had been before he died. The two of us searched through a stack of yellowing magazines for something he had published long ago. We couldn't find it. But on a tattered sheet was scrawled, "My light has gone out. Now I can no longer do Jewish. I can only be Jewish."

Like my dream grandfather, I didn't know how to "do Jewish." I wasn't even sure I knew how to "be Jewish." Maybe I needed to find out. Seven years ago, I began following my dreams into the Jewish world.

Here are a few of my Jewish dreams, signs for me that revelation is ongoing, that there is a Torah of *mayim chayim*, living water, flowing beneath and alongside the written texts. There is unquestionably a Torah of the hidden heart.

dream one

My grandmother waves a thick cookbook. "This is my Torah," she tells me.

We're on a dingy walkway behind the nursing home where she lives. A voice announces the name of this place. It is Crying, Confessional and Complaint.

Dirty water fills a concrete gutter that runs along the path. My grandmother knows where to turn a valve that will drain the water away.

(I woke from this dream feeling both sad for my grandmother and strengthened by what I had been shown. Women's Jewish tradition—providing nourishment and knowing how to deal with the dirty waters of life—has sustained our people as much as official texts. The play-



wright Naomi Newman says of women's wailing: "If we were men, they'd call this Lamentation." Women's place of Crying, Confessional and Complaint is holy ground.)

dream two

I'm sitting with women and girls outside the building where a seder will be held. While we wait there, a mother asks her daughter to lead us in a song. The girl—about nine years old, stocky, short-haired, unornamented—stands up. Both shy and bold, she begins to sing. I sense how the world will endanger her charming, slightly pushy self-confidence.

Her voice is strong and clear. She sings a song we've

DREAMS

by Susan Rothbaum

never heard:

"There is a rose, and it will shine. . ."

Soon we join in sweet harmonies, the girl's voice rising above the rest. It is so beautiful that we start to cry.

Then it's time to go inside. As people set up for the seder, the daughter and I walk around the room. She teaches me her song.

(When I awoke from this dream, I lay still to remember the song: "There is a rose, and it will shine." It felt like some kind of promise. I was hungry for women's voices. I had heard the bold songs of Jewish girls and the deafening silence of Jewish women. Though our lives had taught us soul wisdom, we stood tongue-tied before scholarly tradition. Perhaps, as in my dream, we would begin by meeting outside the formal community. But we would find a way to share our songs.)

d r e a m t h r e e

A darkened room in a dancing school. One of the dancers is a curly-haired man, airy and powerful. I think he's gay. He is dancing for someone we can't see. He gathers himself in, eyes closed in the passionate concentration of prayer or sex.

"Glorietta," he mutters. "Glorietta." His feet trace a circle as if she is at the center. He opens his eyes, turns to the entryway. A door opens, letting in light. It's Glorietta! It's the Sabbath Bride! He's so glad to see her, we're all so glad. She comes in, graceful.

In a moment, everyone falls away into the dark. I'm there with her alone. Her white gown is loose from her shoulders to the floor. Above her head an arc of white cloth curves like a calla lily, framing a dark hollow around her face. The Sabbath Bride stands with lowered gaze, indrawn, radiant.

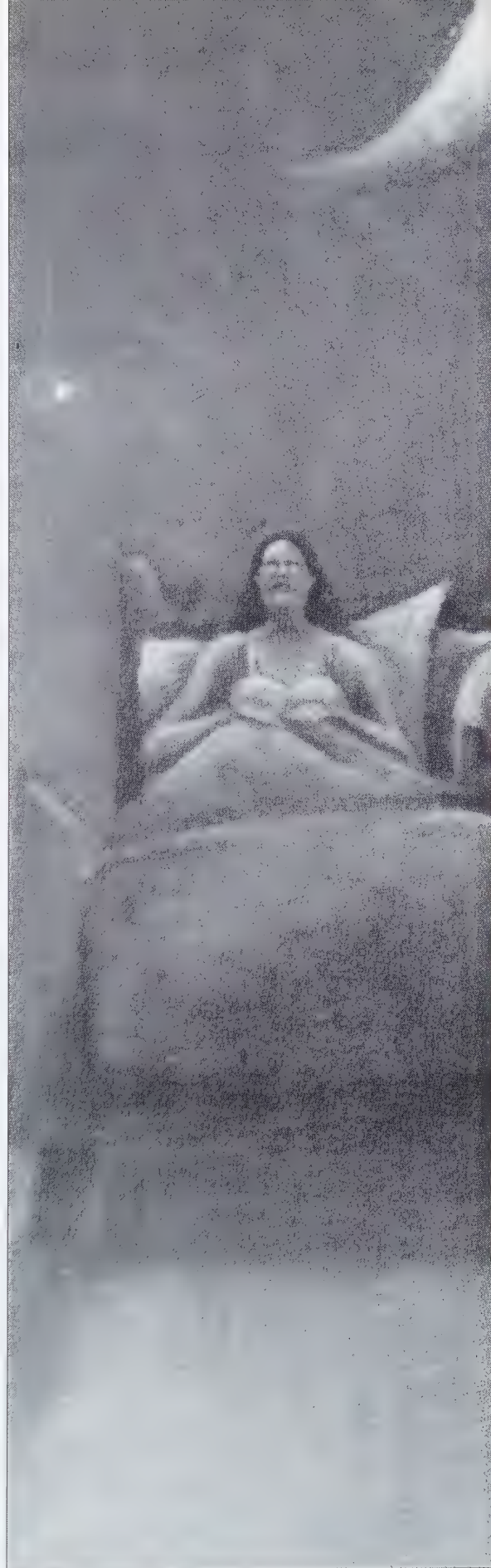
I begin to dance around her. Self-consciousness makes me stiff, but I push through it, flinging my arms and legs widely. Leaning along one side like a windblown tree, my arm is a branch, a lover yearning toward her. Curling back, I draw her light to me. Though I don't touch her, I've never felt so erotic, so spiritual. Leaping and spinning around her brightness, I give myself to the Sabbath Bride.

(I awoke feeling that I had been visited by an angel. This dream still colors my waking life. On Friday night, as I draw the candlelight toward me and welcome the Sabbath, I know in a new way "who" I am welcoming. The halos of flame remind me of the arc around her face. When I sing for my congregation's Sabbath services, I invite her presence: "Come, Sabbath Bride—be in my song.") ■

Susan Rothbaum is a writer and singer who lives with her partner in Minneapolis.

NOTE: Interested in learning about dreams in Jewish tradition? See *Visions of the Night* by Joel Covitz, Shambhala, Boston, 1990. A beautiful guide to living with dreams of any kind is *A Little Course in Dreams* by Robert Bosnak, Shambhala, Boston, 1986.

ILLUSTRATION BY KAREN STOLPER



BREAST

Breast cancer seems to be everywhere. Each of us knows someone—a mother, cousin, childhood friend—who has struggled with the disease, or succumbed to it. With an estimated 182,000 new cases diagnosed each year—and a quarter of these fatal—breast cancer is the leading cause of cancer death among women in the age range of 35 to 54.

A different statistical look at breast cancer shows that it has claimed, in the last two decades alone, more American lives than both World Wars, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War all together. It's not that medical researchers are not fighting cancer (the National Cancer Institute and the American Cancer Society have spent over one billion dollars on fighting breast cancer in the last twenty years alone—though some women's organizations express anger that the American Cancer Society has spent only 5% of its 1992 budget on breast cancer research; and the National Cancer Institute only 10%). It's that, no matter what, the disease seems to be gaining on us.

Jewish women seem particularly aware of this frightening plague, and our fears are not, it seems, unfounded. Many reliable epidemiological reports, as well as popular news stories, list "Jewish" as one of the primary risk factors for developing breast cancer. It's a trait that often looks incongruous, folded in, as it usually is, among other, more standard, risk factors.

In one typical report, for example, a 1982 epidemiological study for the American Cancer Society in New York, the authors note "a number of widely accepted risk factors for this dis-

How Risky Is It to Be Jewish?



B Y
Y A E L
G R E E N

ease, which have been documented with a fair degree of consistency. These include family history of breast cancer; nulliparity [not ever having given birth]; late age at first live birth; early age of menarche; late age at menopause; high-dose radiation exposure; and being single, Jewish or obese."

Another study, this one of Long Island women, conducted by the New York State Department of Health, Bureau of Cancer Epidemiology, concludes that most prominent among demographic risk factors are "increasing age, high socioeconomic status, urban residence, North American or Northern European residence, Jewish religion."

A Johns Hopkins University School of Hygiene and Public Health study led by Dr. Susan P. Helmrach and published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* concludes, "A positive history of benign breast disease, a positive family history of breast cancer, Jewish religion, and twelve or more years of education were each independently associated with an increased risk of breast cancer." And a 1992-New York Times article simply states point blank: "Jewish women have a higher risk of breast cancer."

With such a jumbled list of factors, how does someone figure out what it all really means? Jewish women living on Long Island are, in the words of one informant to LILITH, "generally in a state of low-level, ongoing panic in regard to their belief that they're specifically vulnerable to breast cancer." But

CANCER

is being Jewish truly a risk, independent of other categories, or does being Jewish simply encompass other high-risk factors—such as fatty diets, environmental factors and hormonal history? Is “being Jewish” just an artifact of improperly controlled studies, or is it an incontrovertible factor of high risk?

Additionally, are there factors Jewish women can control—like what we eat, what kind of birth control we use, whether we use estrogen replacement, where we live—or are the factors primarily beyond our control? Have scientific reports, in fact, appropriately controlled for the factor “Jewish?” Or should Jewish women be calling for more thorough research and more careful reporting before we give ourselves up as “victims” to an indomitable force?

Indeed, no research has been done exclusively on Jewish women to determine why we are more at risk than the general population. Some people who challenge the research quoted above (and other similar work) argue that a complicating issue is the “reporting” factor: Jews simply use doctors more, and therefore we are likelier to be diagnosed with breast cancer. Others question whether “age” has been fully controlled for in various studies. (Interestingly, though Jewish women are noted as being at higher than average risk especially over age 40, black women are at higher risk than white women under age 40.) The profile of Jewish women who are currently over the age of 40 (including what foods we were brought up on, what birth control we used in our twenties, etc.) may look quite different for Jewish women who will become middle aged after the year 2000.

Epidemiologists isolate breast cancer issues without a specific interest in the Jewish woman’s angle, and Jewish demographers look at women’s fertility and reproductive choices,

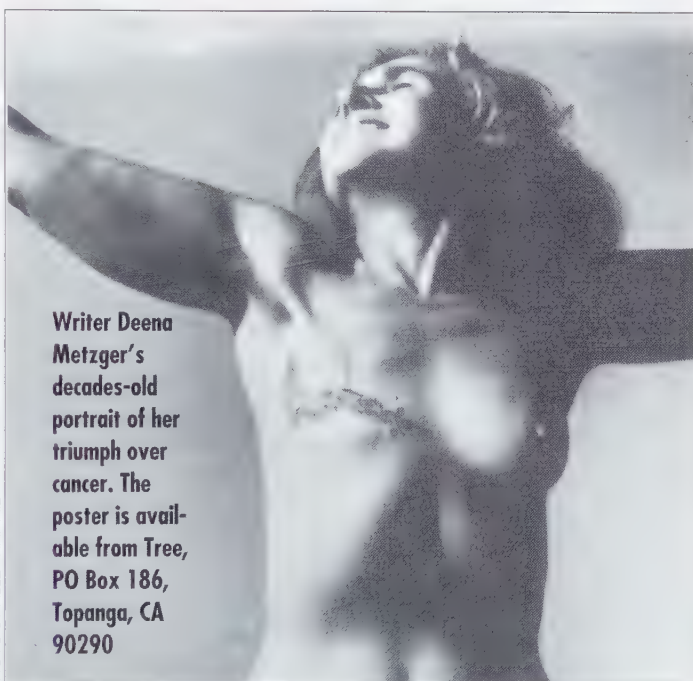
Do our reproductive & educational choices

for example, without relating these statistics to Jewish women’s high incidence of breast cancer. So who is interested in correlating these two sets of information? So far as we can tell, only LILITH.

We know, for example, that (according to the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey) Jewish women’s fertility is substantially below that of the general population—by ages 40 to 44, Jewish women average 1.6 children, considerably below the 2.1 average of all white women in that age group. We also know that Jewish women are the best educated women in America today—64% of us have

college degrees, as compared to less than 15% of all other white women.

Our careerism and our drive for education are two reasons why we delay childbearing and have lower fertility rates (two factors implicated as high breast cancer risks). Are fertility and educational levels, then, “Jewish” factors that put us at risk for developing cancer? (If you’re a Mormon woman, by the way, you are at less than average risk for breast cancer.) What is a truly independent variable, what codetermined, what a matter



Writer Deena Metzger's decades-old portrait of her triumph over cancer. The poster is available from Tree, PO Box 186, Topanga, CA 90290

PHOTO BY HELLA HAMMID

increase our chances of developing breast cancer?

of insufficient controls?

The questions are complex, and disentangling the many factors presents a formidable task. Yet it’s useful for each of us to look at the key risk factors presented here, to see what we as individual Jewish women can discern about breast cancer risk in our own lives.

ESTROGEN --AND LIFE CHOICES

High estrogen levels have been conclusively linked to an increased risk of developing breast cancer. The majority of women are genetically predisposed to breast cancer, according to Dr. Victor Herbert, hematologist and scientific editor of *The Mount Sinai School*

Mammography. Listen up.

Willa Morris, a writer in Great Neck, Long Island, was diagnosed with breast cancer 2 years ago, at 47. Her cancer was found by a routine mammogram, and she has some very strong comments on being vigilant about one's own care:

"I was really fortunate, if you believe in a silver lining. I had wondered about the advice given to women under 50—that maybe mammograms weren't useful, or that they needn't be done every year, but should be done every 2 years. I asked a radiologist, who said 'Split the difference.' It had been 18 months since my last mammogram, so I went. And they found white spots on the film. Look at the statistics that say that women under 50 don't need mammography—where would I be?

"For me the nightmare—and I think for lots of women—is in not getting the best of medical care. I am not *casual* about wanting to make sure that I'm getting the best, and I sometimes feel that the statistics are just not good enough to reassure me. I want to know that the person is well trained and that the equipment is perfect. It's your job to make sure that people don't screw up. What if someone not so competent had read my mammogram? I could be in much worse shape."

Synagogue sisterhoods and Jewish women's organizations often encourage their members to stop by for a mammogram at a mobile facility temporarily set up near a meeting site (in a "mammography van" parked outside the synagogue, in some cases). Does it matter whether you take advantage of the convenience of a mobile facility or arrange for a mammogram at a radiologist's office? Possibly. Here is what to look for when you have a mammogram:

Ask who the radiologists are. Ask who'll be reading the x-ray. Get her/his phone number in case you have questions. Ask when and how will you find out the results. You also should have the film looked at right there to avoid a second trip if the mammogram is unreadable. Ask if the equipment is checked—and, if necessary, recalibrated—between uses.

You are not being unreasonably demanding if you want to make sure that your health is being attended to in the best way possible.

WHO GETS BREAST CANCER IN ISRAEL?

Each year, breast cancer attacks 17 non-Jewish women in Israel out of every 100,000, compared to 80 Jewish women, reports the Israel Cancer Registry. The incidence is also significantly higher among Ashkenazi immigrants than among Sephardi newcomers. For Israeli-born Jewish women, irrespective of their ethnic background, the level of breast cancer approaches that of Ashkenazi immigrants. Why are Ashkenazi women more susceptible? Why are levels rising among Israeli-born women? Why are non-Jewish Israelis (largely Arabs) comparatively safe? Hadassah-Hebrew University Medical Center oncologists implicate—as American researchers do—lifestyle, diet and environment.

of *Medicine Complete Book of Nutrition*. Whether the breast cancer will express itself depends on a women's level of estrogen, the female sex hormone. "The cancer is triggered into active proliferation by estrogen," Herbert says.

But do Jewish women have more estrogen coursing through their systems, thus putting them at higher risk? There are several factors contributing to high estrogen levels, some more common in Jewish women.

How your own body is programmed for fertility affects your risks of getting breast cancer. Early onset of menstruation (before 11) and late menopause (after 55) are associated with having more estrogen in your body for more years, increasing the breast cancer risk. But neither of these determinants is much within one's own control, and neither is particularly associated with Jewish women.

Another fertility factor related to estrogen levels—if, when, and how often we give birth—is also correlated with breast cancer. Never giving birth, or giving birth to a first child after age 30, elevates the risk of developing a malignant breast lump. Jewish women spend more years in college and graduate school than other women, so they are more likely to delay childbearing, and to have fewer children once they do decide to become parents. There is another correlation here, one often overlooked by demographers and epidemiologists alike: among Jews, having children is strongly associated with being married, and Jewish women are 50% more likely to remain single throughout their childbearing years than are non-Jewish women. (Even at the far end of fertility, between ages 35 and 44, 11% of Jewish women are still in the "never married" category, as compared to 7% of other white North American women.)

One more factor related to estrogen may "look" Jewish, but may in fact be a simple function of economic class: Jewish women are more likely to have ingested estrogen in oral contraceptives or used hormone replacement therapy at menopause. While no conclusive evidence proves that prescription estrogen is harmful, there appear to be some risks.

Most physicians prescribe estrogen to women who have early onset of menopause (before 45) to prevent osteoporosis, the bone loss occurring after menopause). Prescription estrogen also alleviates some uncomfortable symptoms of menopause and benefits the cardiovascular system and a woman's sexual pleasure. Women with other high-risk factors for breast cancer, such as a mother or sister with the disease, or a history of benign or malignant lumps, should be very cautious about seeking hormone replacement therapy when they approach menopause.

WHAT WE EAT

Diet, particularly a diet high in fat, has been listed as a causative factor in breast cancer for many years, according to epidemiologist Dr. Jennifer L. Kelsey of the Stanford University School of Medicine. It's also true that the more body fat you have, the higher your estrogen level

is likely to be.

Can fatty diets take much of the blame for breast cancer? For instance, Asian women in Asia, whose diet consists mostly of rice, and who have less body fat, also don't get breast cancer, says Victor Herbert. The high-fat American diet plays a salient role in this country's breast cancer rate.

Do Jewish women have particularly fatty diets? And do our diets account for our position in the high-risk group? With the variegated Jewish community of the '90s, it is nearly impossible to put a finger on what comprises a so-called Jewish diet.

"Are Jewish diets today just upper-middle-class diets?" asks Janet Wittes, a Washington, D.C., bio-statistician, "or are they different in their fat content or in their distribution of fats from the average diet of non-Jews?" Do Jewish women, in fact, eat differently from our non-Jewish neighbors?

Wittes, who chairs the Data Monitoring Committee for the Women's Health Initiative at the National Institutes of Health, says that the lag time for the effects of diet is now being studied. The N.I.H. is currently trying to determine, among other things, whether a change in diet—such as less fat and more roughage—will lead to a decrease in breast cancer. It is not known, she says, whether a woman in her 60's getting breast cancer today might be seeing the results of foods eaten 20 to 30 years ago.

The Women's Health Initiative is hypothesizing, in their current breast cancer studies (the largest set of studies ever taken in the U.S.), that fatty diet is the most significant risk factor of all. Certainly, grown Jewish daughters tend to eat quite differently than did their mothers and/or grandmothers—does this change the "Jewish" breast cancer risk? And are dietary changes that we might make today in any way significant retroactively?

WHERE WE LIVE

According to a report in the Detroit Metro Times, three out of four women who develop breast cancer do not have any of the primary risk factors identified above. Perhaps the real culprit, this report suggests, is environmental pollutants.

Sandra Steingraber, a biologist at Columbia College in Chicago, told the Detroit Metro Times: "Cancer is caused by carcinogens. Astonishingly, you can read entire tracts about cancer and the word carcinogen never comes up. . . .Seemingly authoritative agencies have framed the cause of the disease as a problem of behavior rather than as one of exposure to disease-causing agents."

Several studies have shown that DDT and other chlorine-based chemicals commonly used as pesticides and in industry are known carcinogens. Areas of Long Island, where breast cancer rates stretch above the rest of the country's—and where being Jewish was singled out as a high-risk factor—were routinely sprayed with DDT in the '50s.

According to a 1991 study published in the British medical journal *The Lancet*, women working in a German pesticide plant had double the cancer mortality rate of the rest of the German population. And a U.S. Environmental Protection

Agency study says that counties with hazardous waste sites were 6.5 times more likely than counties with no such sites to have higher breast cancer prevalence.

A recent study conducted by Dr. Mary Wolfe in the New York City found that women who developed breast cancer had higher levels of chlorine-based pesticides in their systems than did women without breast cancer.

A study in Israel paints a stark picture of the environmental contribution to breast cancer. Until 1978, Israeli dairy products were contaminated with extraordinarily high levels of carcinogenic pesticides. The chemicals ingested by women produced concentrations of the carcinogens in breast milk and body fat at levels as much as 800 times the United States average. After public outcry, an Israeli Supreme Court decision began a phase-out of the noxious pesticides. Levels of the chlorine-based substances in mother's milk dropped quickly, and after a decade so did breast cancer rates among younger women.

Yet environmental factors have been all but dismissed by the National Cancer Institute and the American Cancer Society. Many women's advocacy groups—both Jewish and non-Jewish—have challenged research funded by the chemical and cosmetics industries, saying that they have an incentive to ignore environmental factors, and that they instead orient women to blaming themselves.

Says Sandra Steingraber, "by emphasizing heredity [and diet] the cancer establishment encourages women to blame their mothers, which many are inclined to do anyway. Blaming the victim may be appropriate for diseases such as lung cancer," says the Metro Times story, "where there is a clear behavioral culprit—smoking—but it simply doesn't hold up against the evidence about breast cancer. It is, however, a convenient way to avoid larger environmental questions."

Since Jewish women tend to live in urban areas, is this another confounding variable? Does our high risk "look" Jewish, but simply represent a function of geography?

OUR GENETIC PREDISPOSITION

A woman whose mother or sister had breast cancer has a significantly higher chance of developing a malignancy than does a woman from a non-breast-cancer family. "Of all the cases diagnosed in the United States each year, as many as 10 percent stem from hereditary defects," Geoffrey Cowley wrote in a Newsweek cover story on breast cancer (December 6, 1993). Does this imply that there is a breast cancer gene passed from mother to daughter? Most studies have concluded that genetic predisposition is a prerequisite, especially for premenopausal cases. Whether or not the breast cancer expresses itself, however, depends on all the above mentioned factors such as estrogen levels, body fat and the environment.

The Newsweek article reports that researchers have come close to isolating the breast cancer gene, and that studies have revealed that members of families with breast cancer all have the same abnormal genetic marker. That defect, however, has

continued on page 21

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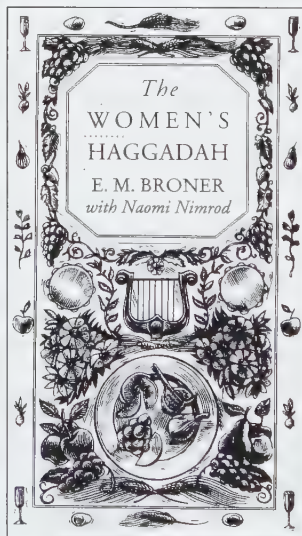
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ORTHODOX FEMINISTS

By

Robin Zieger

Haviva Krasner-Davidson

Sally Berkovic

Desperately Seeking Dialogue

Unlike a feminist who is lesbian,
disabled, or a Reform Jew, is a
feminist who is ORTHODOX
politically incorrect?

I am an Orthodox Jewish feminist, and I am lonely. As a member of a small Jewish community, I do not have many opportunities to talk with individuals who are both committed to traditional Judaism and actively struggling with feminist principles in their lives. Thus it was with great anticipation that I attended a conference on Judaism, feminism and psychology. Yet, during most of the conference, I remained lonely.

While I was excited to participate with over 300 Jewish women from all over the world, I was disappointed to note that only a handful of us were Orthodox. When I asked why Orthodox women failed to participate in such an event, I was given two answers. First, many do not identify with or feel a need for feminist values. (While I don't agree with this stance, I intensely respect these women's sense of security in their lifestyle and their right to their choices.) Second, Orthodox women generally do not feel welcome or acknowledged in feminist circles. After my experience at the psychology conference, I feel great sympathy with this latter point of view.

The conference spanned three and a half days, and included the presentation of over 70 papers (including mine), and experiential workshops; there were also egalitarian religious services. Though many of the presentations were enlightening, I felt disillusioned, and as a "good" psychologist, I wanted to understand why. After all, I've attended other professional conferences where my needs are only partially met, yet I don't leave these experiences feeling disheartened. What was going on for me?

To start with, I think my disappointment was colored by my high expectations. My

3 ORTHODOX FEMINISTS

feminism is a commitment to "choice"—I believe that we must free both women and men from often crippling stereotypes and focus more on the individual. I therefore expect feminist circles to exhibit a respect for pluralism. Since this conference was not only feminist, but also focused on psychology, I assumed there would be an even greater tolerance for diversity based on philosophies promoting self-growth.

In addition to all of this, the conference was "politically correct." There was a written policy stating an effort to accommodate all types of special needs, from those of the disabled, to those who had brought children, to those with specific dietary needs. (Thankfully, I was able to observe Shabbat and obtain kosher food.) Most of the lectures represented acceptance of diversity, including talks on Palestinian rights, sexism and circumcision, and Jewish lesbians raising children. Yet despite this range, there was little opportunity for me to discuss my dilemmas as an Orthodox Jewish woman. My language and points of references felt too different. Most important, I didn't feel safe.

In all fairness, most participants were either neutral or respectful towards me, and during positive moments I found myself in an educative mode, explaining my practices and beliefs to women who were simply curious. Yet I also encountered much prejudice, ignorance and misinformation about Orthodox Judaism in general, and about Orthodox Jewish women in particular. I felt the need to defend and/or correct misconceptions that characterized my Judaism as archaic, subjugating and unfulfilling.

At one point a workshop leader pejoratively told me that she knew what I was about to say—because I was Orthodox. I would never consider making such a statement

to a Reform Jew, a gay Jew, a disabled Jew, and I doubt such a statement would have been tolerated in reference to these classes of people. Why was it all right to say such a thing to me?

I left the conference with the strong sense (that both saddens and embarrasses me) that many of my feminist sisters consider "Orthodox" and "feminist" to be oxymoronic. We are pigeonholed and stereotyped as pregnant, "bare-foot" and in the kitchen. We are seen as having poor self-esteem, poor body image, and as being intellectually unstimulated, devalued, and oppressed by the patrilineal structure.

In contrast, most of the Orthodox women I meet, feminist or not, are happy, fulfilled, and respected by their male and female community alike. Their lives feel not only willingly chosen, but deeply meaningful. Those women who have incorporated feminist principles into their lives do not generally feel a need to redefine tradition.

I personally am Orthodox because I believe that the Torah was directly transmitted by God at Sinai. Orthodoxy, on a day-to-day basis, adds a great deal to my life. I feel a profound spiritual connection to God, to tradition, and to my community. I feel respected and equally valued as a woman. I cannot in good conscience easily dismiss Jewish laws of the past; while tradition does grow and evolve, I cannot participate in rewriting an entire tradition.

As a result of my beliefs, the dilemmas I face as an Orthodox feminist psychologist are different from those of my less traditional sisters. Workshops I would have profited from might have included: traditional women's mitzvot [commandments]; sensitizing rabbis to the needs of women; promoting women's Judaic education; helping women take on leadership roles in the Jewish community; designing meaningful bat mitzvah ceremonies; struggling with feminism within heterosexual relationships, marriage and parenthood; and affecting change within a traditional religious structure. In contrast to solely egalitarian services that did not speak my liturgical language, I would have enjoyed the chance to participate in a traditional prayer service for and by women.

Would I attend such a conference again? Actually, despite my loneliness and disillusionment, yes. I'm not one



"It saddens and embarrasses me that many of my feminist sisters consider 'Orthodox' and 'feminist' to be oxymoronic."

"Orthodox"

"feminist"

to throw out a baby with the bath water. First and foremost, I consider myself an observant Jew. Yet feminism, like psychology and other scientific and political movements, enhances my identity as a woman, a Jew, and a member of the human race. I believe that religious and humanistic growth always involves struggle, and eventually change and transformation.

When we stop struggling, we stop growing. Community involves dialogue. I invite Jewish feminists to consider my point of view. Let's continue the struggle and the conversation. ■

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Desperately Seeking T'fillin

I am one of a small number of observant Jewish women who have taken upon themselves the mitzvot *aseh shehazman g'rammah*, the category of positive "time-bound" commandments that have traditionally been required only of men: the wearing of *t'fillin* [phylacteries], *tallit* [prayer shawl], *tzitzit* [fringed undergarment] to name a few. These mitzvot are called "time bound" because they are performed only during the day, not in the evening or at night. The reason I have chosen to observe them is that, contrary to popular belief, there are no prohibitions against women doing so; their observance makes Judaism more meaningful to me; and, performing these mitzvot helps me work towards challenging women's place in Judaism.

The most common reaction I get when I tell other observant Jewish women of my undertaking is: "Why do you want to take on more responsibilities than you already have? I'm relieved not to have to perform these burdensome mitzvot!"

At first I was surprised at this reaction. I assumed that most women are feminists at heart; that most observant Jewish women are torn between their commitments to tradition and their identities as self-respecting women; that most Orthodox women resent the back seat they are expected to take in public ritual life. Most of all, I assumed most women who are already deeply committed to a religious Torah life, given the opportunity and direction, would jump at the chance to take on more mitzvot—whose purpose is, after all, to bring us closer to God.

These days, however, I am not so naive. I realize that most of us are quite complacent in our synagogues, communities and homes. Nevertheless, I still appeal to observant Jewish women: Won't some of you keep me company in this cause, observing these traditionally-male mitzvot?

Most of us have been led to believe that women are forbidden, by Jewish law, to undertake these commandments. But this is not the case. I would like to explain why women are completely within the bounds of *halakha* [Jewish law] if we wear *t'fillin*, *tallit* and/or *tzitzit*.

First, the Babylonian Talmud, in the tractate Rosh Hashana 33a, maintains that women are allowed to perform these mitzvot. According to the Ashkenazic tradition (the RaMaH in the Shulkhan Arukh), women can even say a blessing when we perform these commandments.

The tradition goes on to provide examples of righteous women who are recorded to have actually donned *t'fillin*, *tallit* and *tzitzit*. Again, in the Talmud, in Eruvin 66a, there is the case of Mikhal, the daughter of King Saul, who took upon herself these mitzvot; and there is a tradition that Rashi's daughters donned *t'fillin* as well.

So, *halakha* clearly does not stand in our way.

Many Orthodox women also hold the incorrect belief that the strictures of *tz'niut* [dressing modestly] forbid women from donning traditionally male ritual garb. But I argue that the attention we draw to ourselves through fulfilling these commandments is not immodest in the least—on the contrary, it shows our ardent, full attachment to Judaism and to God. One might maintain, paradoxically, that women wearing *t'fillin*, *tallit* and *tzitzit* are not infracting *tz'niut*, but are actually observing a more stringent application of "modesty."

There is yet another mistaken belief—that *t'meut* [ritual impurity] stands in the way of women to want to wear *t'fillin*, *tallit* and *tzitzit*—or, in other words, that women who menstruate cannot touch ritual objects such as Torahs or *t'fillin*, because we defile them. This idea has been roundly rejected

If we women begin wearing *t'fillin*, says the trailblazing author, halakhic snowballing is inevitable, and ordaining Orthodox women as rabbis becomes tautological.

3

ORTHODOX FEMINISTS

by authorities much more reserved than I. A Torah, like a *mikvah* [ritual bath], cannot be made impure—neither can a *tallit*, *tefillin* or *tzitzit*.

In other words, we women have the rabbis' full halakhic permission to participate in these mitzvot.

From my point of view, if women are reaping the benefits of public life—namely status and income—we should also take upon ourselves the Jewish responsibilities that go along with participating in that sphere. There are good reasons that men have been obligated to perform daily religious rituals—being out and about in the world, the mitzvot remind men not to forget that time is sanctified and belongs to God, not just to the marketplace—and if we assume these reasons are sociological (rather than biological), we should realize the need for us, too, to perform these mitzvot when we take on what have traditionally been considered “men’s roles.”

Actually, on a textual basis I would argue that not only are women allowed to perform these mitzvot, but we should be obligated to perform them. In the Mishnah (Kiddushin 1:7), we find the statement, “All time-bound positive mitzvot, men are obligated to perform and women are exempt from performing.” The Gemarrah on that Mishnah (Kiddushin 33b) then explains: “How do we know this is so? It is learned from *t’fillin*—just as women are exempt from *t’fillin* [the Gemarrah learns this from Mishnah 3:3], so too are women exempt from all time-bound positive mitzvot. And *t’fillin* is learned from Torah study—just as women are exempt from Torah study, so too are women exempt from *t’fillin*.”

Today women are strongly urged to learn Torah, based on the Responsa of the Hafetz Hayyim and others, and therefore the conclusion of the Gemarrah no longer applies. Although women may not be obligated to learn Torah to the extent that men are, they are certainly not exempt. If women are not exempt from Torah study, then the entire *g’zeira shava* [rabbinic logical analogy] falls apart.

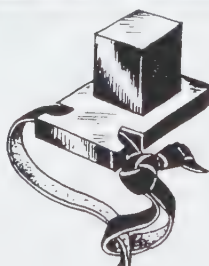
But the main reason I urge other women to take on these mitzvot is that my morning recitation of the *sh’ma* [wherein the commandments to don *t’fillin* and *tzitzit* are actually prescribed] has become a transforming experience for me. I feel an unbelievably powerful connection to God while kissing my *tzitzit* and simultaneously saying that God commanded us to wear fringes on our four-cornered garments.

How odd to recite these words, as 99% of observant women do, and constantly exempt ourselves from their meaning. What an alienating experience to recite words that speak directly to “you”—the one who prays—and yet not mean us at all, just our brothers, fathers, husbands and sons. How different it feels to me, how much more profoundly religious, knowing, as I wear my own *tzitzit*, that God now speaks to me and my experience.

Beyond the halakhic and the emotional, I also have a political motivation. It is my hope that if enough women take on these additional religious requirements, it will become imperative for men (following the logic of *kavod ha-tzibur*, respect for the congregation) to include us in *minyanim* [prayer quorums], let us represent them as leaders of these minyanim, and perhaps even eventually accept us as witnesses on religious legal documents. Then nothing will stand in the way of our becoming rabbis and cantors. We will be equal members of the congregation.

It’s not easy, believe me, to blaze this trail. I don’t always feel comfortable making a statement when I pray. Sometimes I just want to *daven* [pray]. And sometimes I have to forego wearing a *tallit* on Shabbat (*t’fillin* are only for non-holy days) because I know I may cause a scene, and when I am a guest in friends’ or relatives’ places of prayer, I do not want to embarrass them.

For instance, although I do wear my *tallit* at the Young Israel congregation in which I grew up (there I feel people will confront me personally with their questions, objections or support), I do not wear it at the Young Israel of my parents-in-



The author, Haviva Krasner-Davidson, with her already radicalized baby girl, Michal, named after—who else?—the only woman in the Bible who donned *t’fillin*.

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law. I know it would put them in an uncomfortable position, defending a cause that is not their own. So I compromise for the sake of *shalom bayit* [family harmony], and I let my *tzitzit*—worn under the clothes—suffice on those weekend visits.

And then, of course, there are times when I know my actions will be taken in entirely the wrong way. For example, when my husband and I went to visit friends for Shabbat in a *haredi* [ultra-Orthodox] neighborhood outside of Jerusalem. There the fact that I went to shul at all was statement enough. If I had worn a *tallit*, I would probably have been thrown out; and our hosts—who do not agree with my decision to take on these *mitzvot*—would have suffered for my principles long after I left.

But the hardest thing about choosing my path is that it sets me apart. I fit in nowhere. I prefer an egalitarian *minyan*, but I won't *daven* with a microphone; I wear *t'fillin*, but I also wear a hair covering. When my husband and I were considering moving out to the suburbs a year or so ago, I called some rabbis in the area and explained our needs. Most rabbis were kind—they too know the *halakhah*—but advised me not to move to their neighborhoods. "You won't feel comfortable here," they said. "We're a very traditional community. No one wants to make waves."

One rabbi, however, was downright rude. "You mean you keep *Shabbos*?" he exclaimed in damning amazement, when I explained that a shul with a microphone would not fit our requirements. "You wear a *tallis*, and you keep *Shabbos*? *Kashrus*? I don't understand!" I tried to explain that I wear

tzitzit every day, that I pray every morning with *t'fillin*, that I cover my hair; but it was useless. The idea was preposterous to him.

And thus I am an enigma to some, an absurdity to others, and an *apicores* [a blasphemous non-believer] to still others. Being an Orthodox female *t'fillin*, *tallit*, *tzitzit* wearer is a lonely business. There are times when I feel I am the only one who cares about these issues, or that what I am doing is inconsequential. The truth is, though, that I know there are others out there like me.

So if you are one of these women, please write or call me. I have a vision of starting a support group of women like us—a network offering encouragement, and perhaps even political clout. Alone, we are enhancing our own lives, but together we could change Jewish history—and reach so many more hungry women.

Which brings me once again to my plea: If the *mitzvah* at all appeals to you, try it. Lay *t'fillin*. Wrap yourself in a *tallit*. Wear *tzitzit* under your t-shirts, silk blouses, sweatshirts and cashmere sweaters—tucked in, or even letting the fringes hang unabashedly out, if you are so bold.

Try it, you just might like it. ■

Editor's Note: writer Haviva Krasner-Davidson, would love to be contacted at 3177 18th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20010; 202-332-2138. Krasner-Davidson has recently created a praiseworthy brouhaha by applying for admission to the all-male Orthodox rabbinical program at Yeshiva University. She awaits their letter of acceptance.

Desperately Seeking ...

Naomi is a type—mid-late 30's, observes the Sabbath, eats only kosher food, has a university education, a prestigious job with financial security, a wide circle of interesting friends, and an appreciation of the arts and literature. She's also, however, discouraged: Won't she ever meet a man to marry; is the possibility of motherhood foreclosed? A virgin with a sense of the ironic, she laments, "I could never have children on my own. How could I encourage them to keep the *halacha*, how could I stress the importance of the family, and then explain that I went to a sperm bank or that their father was just a friend who did me a big favor? It's a little crazy."

Single older Orthodox women in the 90's are facing a crisis of faith—fueled by pragmatism—in the face of limited available and suitable male partners. There are no official statistics. However, at most "singles" events, women outnumber men three to one. On "singles weekends" at Catskills resorts, women have been known to

leave before the weekend is over, feeling cheated that the unequal numbers gave the men the freedom to waft between women, picking out the youngest and prettiest.

As I eat my Sabbath dinner with single Orthodox women-friends, we inevitably get around to wringing our hands over the grim situation.

"I should go to more parties, I guess," sighs Andrea, a 36-year-old Manhattan lawyer. She is making explicit society's message, internalized by women, that it's somehow our fault, that "if you really want to get married, you have to make more of an effort."

The conversation then continues on its well-worn track, veering into the "religious men are such wimps" plaint. The basic thrust of this dialogue is that Orthodox men view the world as black or white, whereas we women see gray, and thus handle the world much better. The office Christmas party, the soggy matzo sandwiches, leaving work early on Friday afternoons despite important pro-

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jects—all are gray. We accuse Orthodox men of retreating into rigid patterns that avoid or even deny gray, reducing life to an “us” and “them” paradigm.

Eventually we come around to our supply-and-demand analysis.

“It’s a numbers game in which there are just not enough men to go around,” bemoans Jenny, 33, an urban planner.

“Oh, I don’t know, maybe there actually are enough men,” hazards Naomi, who has had a bit of experience with men who seem to go weird on her. “But not the right sort of men—they can’t handle women with an education, with money, or with a need to maintain a bit of independence.”

As for me, I have been asked many times if I would go out with a non-observant man, and for quite a while my response was unwavering. “I don’t want anyone to take on Orthodoxy because of me. I would rather go out with someone who already is observant, otherwise religion becomes an unnecessarily complicating factor, and it becomes impossible to separate personality issues from frustrations regarding religious difference.”

Generally, the only people who have understood this party-line of mine were other Orthodox women who had grappled with the same issues. Ten years later, though, I must say, things are beginning to look different to me, and the platitudes of my twenties seem naive and rigid, though I understand that, in a more perfect world, these attitudes might have felt valorous.

These days, many of my Orthodox women friends have serious relationships with non-observant men, and while some of these relationships eventually founder, others have led to marriages in which observance and ritual seem almost inevitably destined for compromise. I’m not sure if I’m ready for that.

What’s a woman to do?

Well, lately I think I’ve discovered a new possibility. At age 32, I have started to look at non-Jewish men differently. I have always enjoyed platonic friendships with various non-Jewish men, both sides safe in the knowledge that any-

thing other than friendship was strictly off-limits. Suddenly, though, much to my own surprise, I have hit upon a solution that is obvious in its simplicity, yet scary in its implications. What about gently weaving Orthodox conversion, circumcision and all,

into the conversation? Why not take a decent, interesting, emotionally healthy, witty and intelligent non-Jew, and make him part of the clan? Someone willing to enter the clan would surely appreciate the significance of the religion, and share the sensitivity I feel towards continuity and preservation.

This may not sound outrageous to those readers who know a lot of interfaith couples, or to those who view marriage as an irrelevant social institution. However it does sound close to heresy to women like myself, who want a traditional marriage and family, and who have never dreamed of marrying a non-observant person, let alone a non-Jewish one. It also poses a challenge to *halakha* which states that conversion precisely for the purpose of marriage is to be discouraged.

But the 90’s may be, for better or worse, a time for bold innovation. There are too many stigmatized, older, single, observant women out there. The Jewish community should not ignore us. And Jews unhappy about the overall decline of the Jewish population should be concerned about our welfare, too. Though American society is all about opening options and choices, still, it would be enormously helpful to me and to my Orthodox women-friends to feel encouraged (and legitimized) in explorations that are unorthodox, in decisions that may contradict the “happy endings” of story-book romances in the shtetl.

Some Orthodox women have no interest in marriage, and it’s important, of course, that we respect every woman for whatever her life’s choices are. Speaking for myself, however, and for most of my “thirtysomething” friends, we do not want to be left languishing and childless. ■

Sally Berkovic is a freelance journalist now living in London.



“I have started to look at non-

Jewish men differently. . .

Why not take a decent,

interesting, emotionally

healthy, witty and intelligent

non-Jew and make him

part of the clan?”

male, 28-40, financial security, extraordinary qualities. Note/photo. 5957
Charming. Attractive Brunette
Jewish professional, sincere, sense of humor, traditional values - seeks female, similar qualities, nonsmoker
photo. please, please 2132 ☐
Mensch On The Loose LEAVE

BREAST CANCER *continued from page 13*

not been isolated and can have so many mutations that isolating it will take years of more research.

Yet since genetic predictions can only help in early detection, not in treatment or prevention, reactions have been radical in the few families that have been researched and marked. One woman who had watched breast cancer strike her mother, two sisters and two cousins, opted for a prophylactic mastectomy, according to Newsweek. "I felt like to save our family, all the girls had to get their breasts off," she said. And what health plan would want to cover women who know they will contract cancer or will undergo a costly surgery to "prevent" being hit by the disease? "Finding the genes isn't the end of the challenge," epidemiologist Hoda Anton-Culver told Newsweek. "It's the beginning."

Are Jewish women more genetically prone to breast cancer? Dr. Vicky Seltzer, Chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Long Island Jewish Medical Center, says that her clinical observations lead her to believe that Jewish women are genetically more at risk. "However, we are so close to finding a genetic marker for breast cancer that it doesn't make any sense to separate out Jewish women as a specific group to focus on."

It is clear, however, that if there is a connection it is not nearly as strong as with Tay-Sachs disease, for instance, which is a predominantly Ashkenazic Jewish genetic disorder. "And suppose we did discover there was an elevated risk in Jews, and it had to do with genetics," observes Janet Wittes. "I can't imagine that we as Jews should do anything differently from what we do as women."

So, can we, in fact, label cancer as a "Jewish women's disease?" The Long Island breast-cancer survivors group, One in Nine (named for a woman's chance of getting the disease in her lifetime), objects to the classification of Jewish women as high risk. Some claim there is not a higher incidence of cancer among Jewish women, but simply a higher detection rate that is being revealed, since Jewish women are more likely to see a physician on a regular basis. One in Nine members suggest that Jewish women are being separated out from a pool of other educated, white, upper middle class urban women without ade-

quate research that controls for these factors. Others claim that a call-to-arms for Jewish women may unnecessarily be exacerbating Jewish fears.

Should Jewish women be calling for studies specifically of Jews before we push the panic button? Or do we merely need better controls and more accurate analysis of the data in broader research? Wittes believes a global study in which information on ethnicity and religion is collected might be helpful in determining whether being Jewish is indeed a risk.

"Is it a red herring to say that being Jewish is a risk factor for breast cancer?" asks Wittes. "Sometimes when we researchers say, 'This is a disease of blacks or of Hispanics,' it's the same kind of red herring. If there's a disease that stems from poverty, we look instead at ethnicity, because that is politically correct. Politically, when a disease is related to poverty, we look at ethnicity. My own feeling is that what we ought to be looking at is not 'blacks,' or 'Hispanics,' or, in the case of breast cancer, 'Jewish women,' but variables that relate to diet, poverty, access to health care. There are diseases of the poor, and diseases of the rich."

Whatever the case, the gravity and scope of the illness is enough to make all women and all Jewish organizations have a stake in increased research. Some people, though, actually fear that if, indeed, "being a Jewish woman" becomes accepted as a high-risk factor for breast cancer, it might have a negative impact on our ability to get health insurance.

If Jewish women are at higher risk, studies of possible causes and prevention should be undertaken immediately. If we are not at higher risk, but less than thoroughly controlled studies and data collection are claiming that we are, then it is time to examine that, too. Either case means more research. And perhaps a different look at the statistics we already have.

LILITH believes that much can be learned in the unexplored territory between breast cancer epidemiology and Jewish demographic data. A fine correlation of variables, and a differential "ruling out" of factors that seem independent, but perhaps are not, is what all women deserve.

Yael Green is a freelance writer living in New York City.

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MY MOTHER'S

BY GLORIA GOLDRICH

SECRET DRAWER

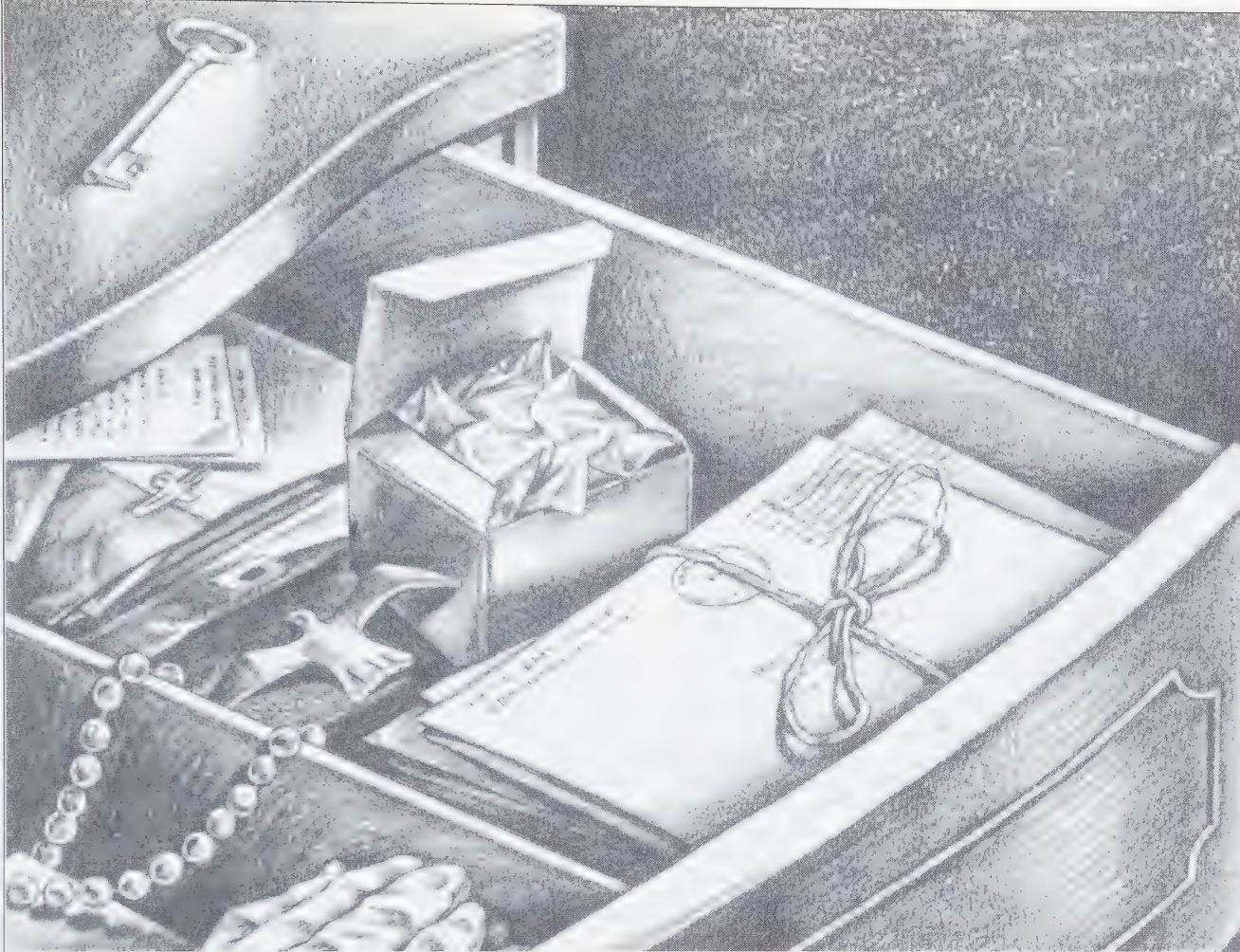
We have cleared the scarred surface of my mother's bureau of the fragrant and intimate clutter of her long life. The unopened bottles of perfume, harvested over decades of birthdays and Mother's Days, have been given away. Carefully, my eldest sister plucked tufts of her silver hair from the bristles of her brush and then placed both the brush and the feather-light ball, as fragile as a spider's web, into the black plastic garbage bag we carry with us from room to room. My mother's lipsticks, I took for myself. I use them cautiously and lick my lips after each application, so that I may taste my mother upon my tongue. The clock, with its oversized numerals, designed for the visually handicapped, has been given to a neighbor whose sight is failing. A cousin has sent my mother's hearing aid and glasses to a foundation that recycles such items, and my daughter has claimed the olivewood box in which they were concealed. My mother was a vain woman and did not want to be reminded of her age and her infirmity.

Now my sisters and I stand before the opened top drawer of the bureau, the drawer which my mother always locked with a small gold key. Throughout our childhoods, that drawer was the only place in our home that was inaccessible to us, although each of us had caught a glimpse of its contents. We would steal up behind our mother as she removed one item or replaced another, as she rummaged through it searching for a document or a brooch. Important things

were stored there, we knew, valuable things, the papers that governed our lives and the small treasures that validated and enhanced her own. This was her private place and even now, a half year after her death, we approach it hesitantly, tentatively.

The right hand compartment is piled with envelopes, the contents of each identified in her beautiful script. Always, she had used the orange Parker fountain pen, our father's first gift to her during the distant days of their courtship when he had been an immigrant furrier and she his shy, part-time bookkeeper. The ink, which I remember in its cerulean brightness, has faded now to the barely discernible lightness of a forget-me-not. We divide the envelopes between us and sprawl across her bed, like girls at a pajama party. "Important Papers," I read aloud and remove the deed to the house, her citizenship papers and marriage contract, our birth certificates, small cards from the Board of Health testifying that we were vaccinated against diphtheria and small pox. She never discarded anything that bore a government stamp.

My sister opens the envelope marked "Cards" which we see at once contains only the hand-crafted efforts of the children we were and those of the children we bore. The oatmeal-colored drawing paper of my elementary school days flakes beneath my touch. We drew flowers and snowflakes, hearts and fir trees. Surely, the sentiments were



copied from the blackboard. HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY TO A SPECIAL MOTHER. YOU MAY FIND ONE FRIEND AND LOSE ANOTHER BUT YOU WILL NEVER FIND ONE AS DEAR AS YOUR MOTHER. Our children, products of progressive education, were less inhibited. They sent her collages fashioned of glittering bits of paper, bright swatches of fabric. Their Magic Markers danced across colored paper to create rainbows and space ships and, on one, a bright silver bird cut from aluminum foil who sings, "GRANDMA, GRANDMA, I LOVE YOU, I DO."

"What do we do with them?" I ask and answer my own question by placing the envelope in the carton I will carry home that night.

The seal of a manila envelope is broken and the bed is spangled with small oval mirrors backed by tinted portraits on polished enamel. We shuffle the mirrors and pass them from hand to hand, then place them portrait side up on the bed. I am reminded of the games my daughters play with their Tarot cards, but of course we are not trying to read the future. It is the past we seek—our mother's past and thus our own. We have, after all, become the women that we are because of the woman she was.

One portrait is of my mother's younger sister, Goldie, dead at 24 and mourned by mother throughout her life. There is a group photo of my mother in a flowered, lace-collared dress, flanked by her younger sisters, all of them large-eyed and dark-haired. And there is another of my mother in a middy

blouse with two young women whom we do not recognize. "Beck?" one sister suggests. "Maybe Zelda," my other sister says. Our mother's intimacies are elusive and we do not want to be cheated.

We study the smiling face of a fair-haired young man who wears a straw hat and a polka dot bow tie. He too is unfamiliar to us.

We hazard guesses. He might have been a neighbor, a cousin, the fiancé of a friend. Then, abruptly, we cease. Our curiosity is disloyal, invasive. Our mother would not approve. We busy ourselves dividing up the mirrors until only the portrait of the unknown young man remains and that, mysteriously, disappears during the course of the afternoon.

We examine the envelope marked "Rose." Our aunt, my mother's only sister to graduate from college. And amidst Rose's report cards from Seward Park High School, the notifications that she had made Dean's List at Hunter College, her honor certificates, we find my mother's library cards from the New York Public Library. The years are 1917, 1918, 1919, 1920 and each card is covered with stamps—date borrowed, date returned. We see that she checked two books out of the library each week, and we imagine her rushing to the East Broadway branch after a long day bent over the ledgers of the dry goods company at which she worked.

We wonder about the books that accompanied her home. Geography and history. She knew the capital of every state,

spun dates toward us as we studied. Poetry. She committed long poems to memory. "Evangeline" and "Hiawatha" and "Rabbi Ben Ezra." Poems were her companions as she stood at counter and sink. Cutting up vegetables, squeezing fresh oranges from the mound of halves that confronted her each morning, she would burst into words as others burst into song. "Under the spreading chestnut tree the village smithy stands...." The needs of her parents and her siblings had forced her to leave school; and I understand that she placed her library cards with my aunt's academic awards because they comprised her own education, her own secret diplomas, her own touching and formidable achievement.

Other envelopes are marked with our names and contain report cards, clippings from school papers, induction certi-

pass the Jerusalem beads from hand to hand. We remember the night she showed them to us. "He wanted twenty shekels but I got them for fifteen." "How proud she had been of her shrewdness and her daring. The beads are pink, and I claim them for my younger daughter who always played with them when she visited her grandmother.

In the center of the drawer are the binoculars she never used, the traveling leather medicine case marked with her initials, the capsule containers empty, the folding spoon pristine. We find the orange Parker pen, its gold point wiped clean. We unfurl fraying tissue paper and find white kid gloves and long black leather gloves lined with cashmere and mitts crocheted of metallic silver. There too are the scarves, square of bright and patterned silk, long swathes of

There is the letter that I wrote her from camp: "I hate it here. Take me home."

cates to Arista, Arkon, Young Judaea, the Girl Scouts, a melange of postcards and letters. There is a note I wrote her from camp. "I hate it here. I am so unhappy. Please take me home." Why did she keep that, I wonder. Did she want to punish herself as sometimes I punish myself by remembering by own maternal indiscretions, the well-meant judgments that my children perceive to be cruelty?

In the left-hand compartment of the drawer, small boxes are stacked upon each other. These contain her treasures, not her valuables. I open a small white box and finger a sea gull carved of wood which I brought her from my windjammer cruise in Maine. There are pins and necklaces of Elat stone, *chai* charms carved of silver and amber. Shrouded in cotton in a white box from Martins Department Store (which surely closed two decades ago) is her charm bracelet. My sister holds it up, tarnished but tinkling with all the mementos of her good fortune, eleven tiny shoes to mark the birth of each grandchild, the dates carved in strokes so small and narrow they have almost disappeared into the metal, charms to mark her 70th birthday and then her 80th birthday, a charm in the shape of the State of Israel.

Now we open the little boxes in a frenzy of excitement, with laughter, as we finger the beads she bought in a Jerusalem market place, the blue and white Delft pin she bought in Amsterdam, the enamel bracelet she carried home from Japan. We have stumbled into the souvenirs of the early years of her widowhood when she traveled with energy and excitement. She had done her duty as daughter and sister, wife and mother and she claimed her reward with zest. We



pastel cashmere, woven lengths of wool from the island of Mykonos and the bazaars of Istanbul. We tie them about our own necks, drape them over our heads.

One of my sisters asks if she may take the white silk scarf I brought from Paris.

"It smells of Mama," she says.

I nod. I know that my sister will never wear it, but she will take it from the drawer once in a great while and sniff it, searching out the mother scent.

And beneath the scarves are the intricate calendars that mark the Hebrew dates of the deaths of her parents and her siblings over consecutive years, the maps of the cemeteries with the grave sites marked. We look hopelessly at each other. Who will assume her responsibilities to the dead? We think of how the memorial candles flickered on her kitchen table when we visited.

"My mother's *yahrtzeit*," she would say in reply to our curious glances. Or that of her sister, her brother, her father.

We divide up the calendars, the maps. We will try to keep faith with her commitment but offer each other no guarantees.

The drawer is empty now, divested of memory and treasure. We wipe it clean and place the small gold key on the bureau top. Surely the Russian woman, to whom we have given the bedroom furniture, will have need of it. Like my mother, like all women, she will claim a private place to harbor treasure and memory, to conceal, and thus preserve, her own sweet secrets. ■

Gloria Goldreich is a novelist whose newest book That Year of Our War will be published by Little Brown this spring.

An

BY RACHEL JOSEFOWITZ SIEGEL

Immigrant

Again...

*This Time
in a Country
Called*

Widowhood

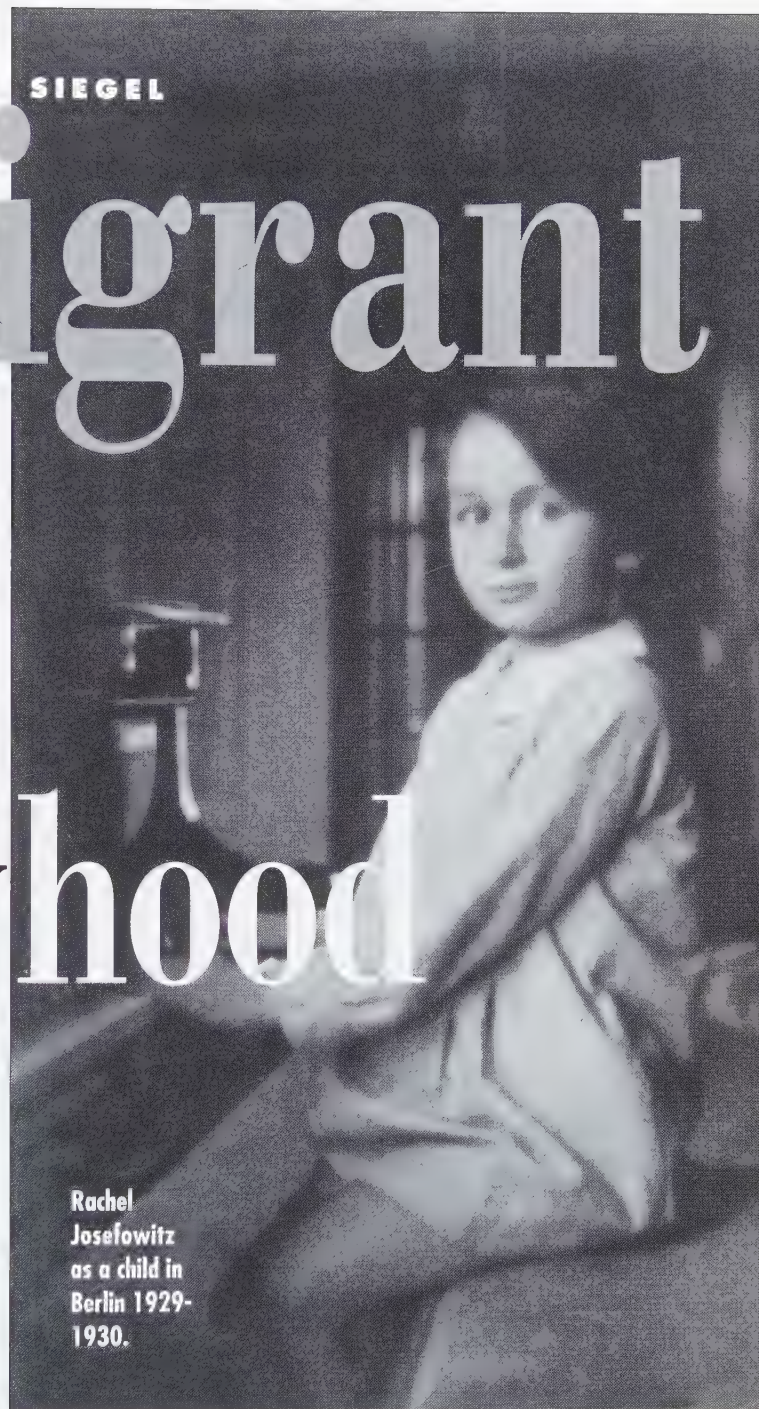
I am a 69-year-old widow. In 1939, when I was fourteen, my family and I landed in New York, fleeing from the threat of Jewish annihilation and impending European war. My family had lived in Lithuania, then Germany, then Switzerland.

Five years after arriving in the U.S. (and three days after graduating from college), I married the man who would share the next 46 years with me. We had a rich life, raising three children, working, involving ourselves in community life.

But everything changed when my husband Ben died. Now I live alone, and I am still getting used to it.

Sometimes, now that three years have passed, I actually forget that I am alone, experiencing it instead as solitude. But at other times I wake up during the night and reach for Ben. In the early months of widowhood this was painful; now it feels almost like a comforting memory.

I even have moments of happiness now—moments that are free of missing him. I have almost gotten used to eating alone, traveling alone. I do miss being able to say “good morning,” and “good night.” I miss touching. I miss the old give and take. I miss laughing and complaining.



Rachel
Josefowitz
as a child in
Berlin 1929-
1930.

The last ten years of Ben's life had been so overshadowed by ill health and a constant fear of imminent crisis or death that at first, when he died, I felt relief: No more worrying. No more constant considering of another person's needs, preferences, opinions. For so long, my life had been balanced unevenly between Ben's medical needs, our intimacy, and my independent life, including my professional work.

In the first months of my widowhood, my sense of “self” in the world swung erratically and unpredictably. I felt numb, then weepy, then desperate to keep reviewing his last illness, to keep talking about him, over and over, to whomever would listen. I had no idea how few people would be willing to listen, not once, but over and over and over.

Here I was again, just like that green immigrant girl, once more spoiling people’s good time with my insistent presence. I reminded people of tragedy, of mortality, of experiences they could not or did not want to bring to consciousness.

As I have grieved and struggled with feelings of loss and displacement, and as my social life has shifted from a world of couples (both straight and gay) to a world of women—widows, divorcees, and single by choice, my memories of immigrant days, for so many years latent, persistently intrude into dreams and waking thoughts.

My new widowhood re-opens long-gone memories of previous losses and challenges.

My family moved and wandered constantly when I was young, searching for relative safety during the pre-war Hitler years. During those early uprootings from one country after another, it was simply expected that I would absorb any new language, and I did; and that I would continue to do well in school no matter what, and I did. That I would adapt to whatever came my way, and I did.

When I was a child, our family never spoke of our pervasive insecurities and non-belonging, our separations, our endless packing and unpacking, the pain of leaving beloved friends and neighborhoods, of changing languages over and over again. We never spoke about the struggles—because we felt so very lucky and privileged to be alive at all.

And though I have made America my home for over fifty years, loving its varied landscapes, walking its beaches and wooded paths, I am suddenly a foreigner again, uncertain of the subtleties of this new country of widowhood. Long repressed and never validated feelings emerge with unexpected urgency, shouting at me: ‘Other!’ ‘Alien!’ ‘Ignored!’ ‘Left out!’ These feelings reverberate with memories of my childhood as a wandering Jew without a country, unentitled even to call my difficulty difficulty.

In my new widowhood, this all came back to me. How can I presume to feel pain among those who have suffered so much more? How can I indulge my grief in the comfort of my beautiful home, when so many old women barely

survive in poverty and illness?

Still, the skills that I acquired as a wandering child serve me well now. Once again, this time as an older woman, a

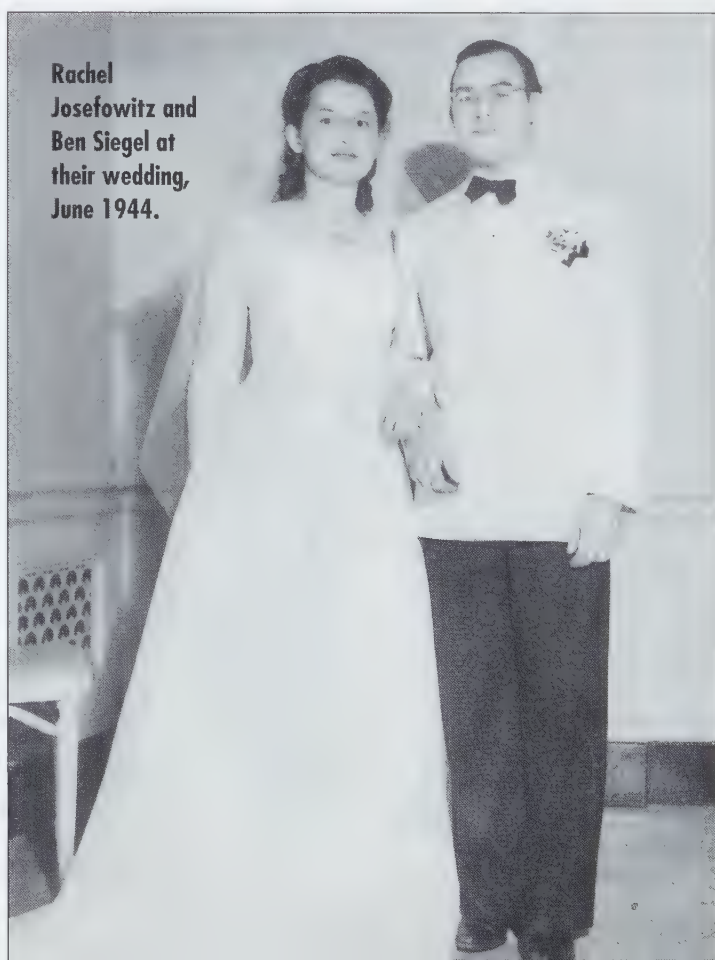
widow, still a Jew, I am not always welcome, my wisdom is not always appreciated, my pain is often overlooked. I am not always certain of my “place” in the world.

Settling Ben’s estate, sorting endless technical, legal and financial papers, made me feel not only tired and angry (why did he leave so much work undone? Why do I have to do my part and his?), but also stupid—like that fourteen-year-old immigrant girl felt, having to learn so much so fast. I feel vulnerable, like long ago, unable to function at my accustomed level of competence.

But then, almost at the same moment, I am marveling at the new skills I’ve learned so fast since Ben died; the new roles I’ve assumed. I recognize another aspect of that immigrant child—coping, elated, resilient.

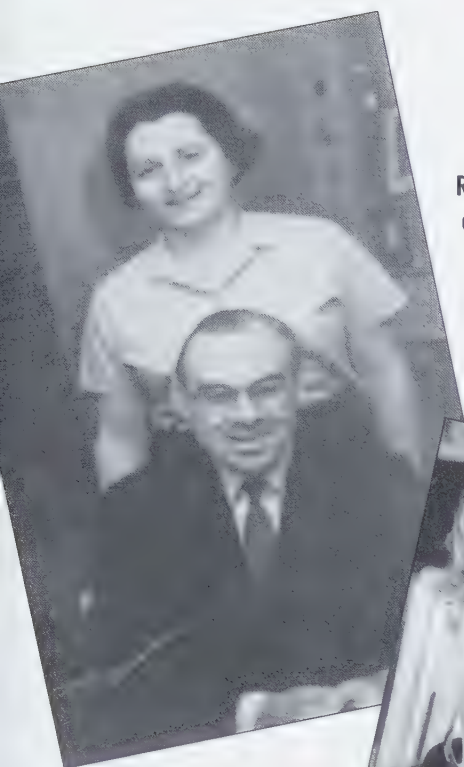
Right after Ben died, my rabbi asked me if I would hold the Torah on Yom Kippur during the Kol Nidrei prayer, as Ben had always done, a role of great honor. That first year, I declined. I would have been the first woman at my temple ever to have been given this honor (it was an opportunity to set a precedent for the participation of women in this holiest ritual of the Jewish year), but I was not sure that the honor was being offered me on my account, and I didn’t want to

*“I miss saying
‘Good Morning’
and ‘Good Night.’
I miss
complaining.”*



**Rachel
Josefowitz and
Ben Siegel at
their wedding,
June 1944.**

PHOTO BY MARIA TAMARKINA



**Rachel Josefowitz
and Ben Siegel in
1963;
and Rachel
today.**

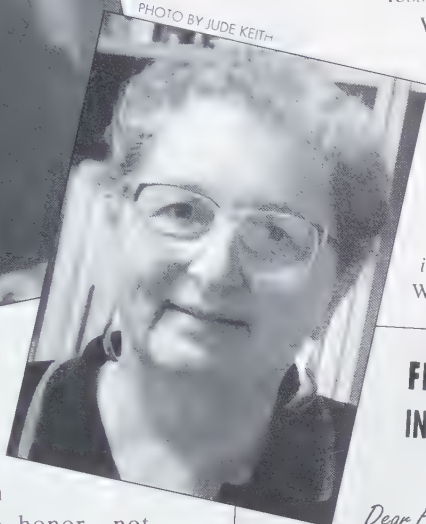


PHOTO BY JUDE KEITH

attain privilege in the community through my husband's death.

But the next Yom Kippur I accepted the honor—not because I was taking my husband's place, and not because I was more worthy than other women—but because I had regained my center, I had gotten my bearings: It was time for me to assert my place among the elders of the congregation.

When my mother was dying in 1983 in Jerusalem, she got agitated when we, her grown children, visited her from our Jewishly-scattered homes in London, New York, and Switzerland. She felt an odd, desperate need to uproot herself one more time.

"*Ich weiss nit uf wesser Welt ich bin,*" she would say, over and over, in Yiddish. "I don't know where I belong." (Or, literally, "I don't know in which world I am.")

I imagined she was reliving earlier days—the unfinished agony of separating from loved ones, of fleeing the terror of persecutions. Survival meant to her uprooting herself, moving to different places. Now, confronting death, she lapsed into her old survival instincts: move, move, a wandering Jew.

But my own experience of loss and aging has been different, a slow awareness of an inner shift in my own sense of rootedness. I gradually have begun to feel

that I indeed belonged in each and all of the places that I have ever called home—instead of feeling that I never really belonged anywhere.

I have gradually discarded much of the clutter that Ben and I had accumulated, that once assured me of my belonging and rootedness. I have moved into a new home, filled with mementos that are dear to me. As I feel less and less like a wandering soul, my present grief helps me to understand and further the healing of so much unattended earlier loss.

When I came to this country, I was in the springtime of my life. Now winter is in the air. I hope and believe that the lessons in personal adaptation, the fullness of a life created in partnership, and the richness of many cultures will continue to sustain me through this final season. ■

Rachel Josefowitz Siegel, M.S.W., is a feminist psychotherapist in private practice in Ithaca, NY, and the co-editor of Jewish Women in Therapy: Seen But Not Heard (Harworth Press, 19??).

FROM THE BINTEL BRIEF: ANOTHER WOMAN, IN ANOTHER TIME, WRITES ABOUT WIDOWHOOD

Dear Friend Editor:

I am a woman of seventy, and as an old reader of the Forward I want to get something off my chest. Not long ago I became a widow for the second time, and my life is bitter.

I lost my first husband when I was in my forties. My husband was not much older than I, and we lived happily together. I helped him in his business in order to make it easier for him. We had a good life, but then I lost him.

When I was left alone my friends began to talk to me about marrying again, but I waited a few years. I can tell you that it was very hard for me to be alone, and when, in time, I met a man who appealed to me, I decided to marry a second time.

He was a widower with two children, but he was a fine, decent man and I got along very well with him and his children. I was like a mother to his children, and when they married, we both led them to the altar. The children lived with us for a short while after they were married. It was a good life, and I got into the habit of going to the station every evening to meet my husband when he came from work. Even in the worst weather, I went out to meet him.

I lived with my husband many years and then, four months ago, I lost him too and I am left all alone. Now in my loneliness I think of my husband constantly, and in the evening about the time he used to come home, I still go out to the station. I stand there hoping he will come home from work, wait a while, have a good cry, and then walk home alone. It makes me feel better when I have a good cry, but I know I should stop going to the station to wait for my deceased husband. The question is—how can I do this?

*With thanks and respect,
Mrs. A.B..*

(reprinted with permission from The Jewish Daily Forward)
The column Bintel Brief (a bundle of letters) ran from 1950-1980.

Dena Kinstlinger

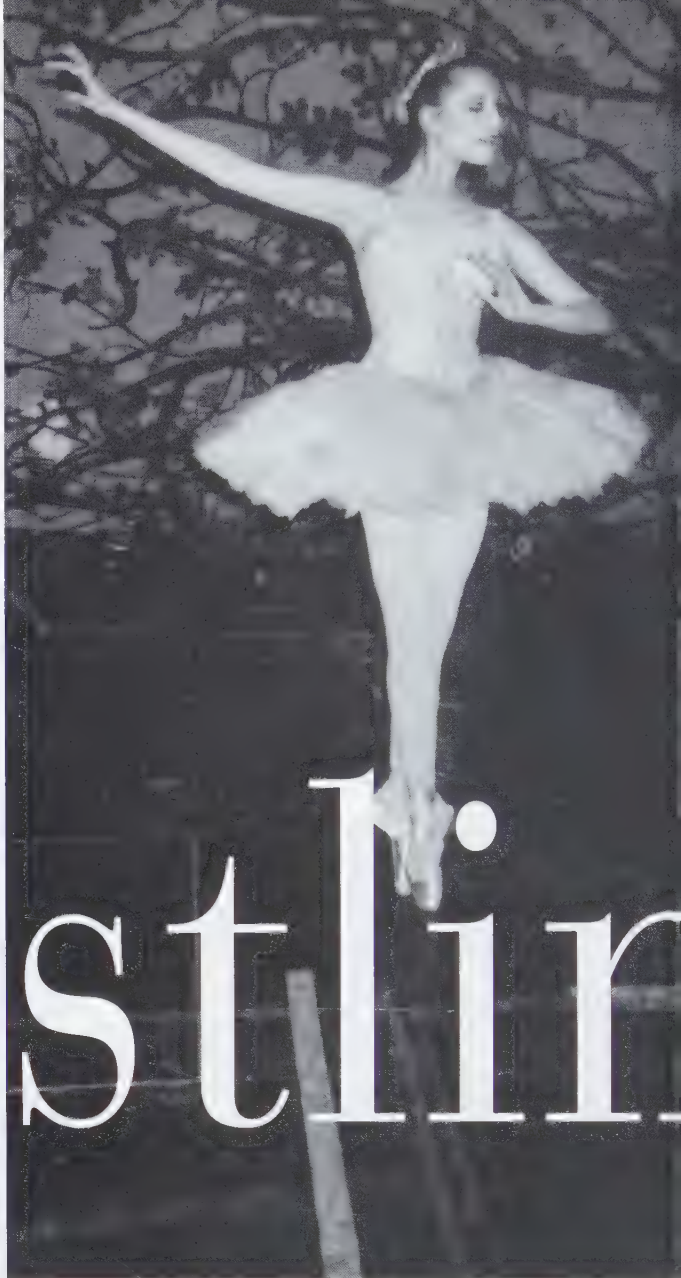
Dena Kinstlinger is an unintentional missionary. As the only *shomer Shabbes* [Sabbath observant] Jew in the entire New York City Ballet, the 21-year-old dancer often finds herself explaining the meaning of dietary laws and Sabbath observances to Mormons, Protestants, Catholics, Muslims, and even to other, less observant, Jews. "Because they may be unfamiliar with the reasons for what I do, we end up talking about them; there's this ongoing dialogue about religion and faith when I'm around."

Kinstlinger began studying dance at the age of four, in a local ballet school in Teaneck, NJ. It was clear from the start

that she was gifted. When her family moved to the nearby town of Englewood where the ballet school was within walking distance, Kinstlinger began attending classes daily. At twelve, she was accepted by the prestigious School of American Ballet, training ground for the renowned New York City Ballet.

While she had attended a modern Orthodox yeshiva until the eighth grade (at her unconventional bat mitzvah she performed a dance she had choreographed), the demands of her ballet classes made her choose the Professional Children's School for high school. But neither her Jewish studies nor her observances faltered; while in high school she took classes at the Jewish Theological Seminary and continued to observe the Sabbath scrupulously and keep kosher. Soon she was offered an apprenticeship to the Company and in 1991 became a full-fledged member of the corps de ballet.

A typical day for Kinstlinger includes a morning ballet class, several hours of rehearsal in the afternoon, and an



YONA ZELDIS McDONOUGH LOOKS AT TWO DANCERS WHO ARE LIVING THEIR DREAMS

evening performance. She is also working slowly towards her B.A., taking classes sometimes at Barnard, sometimes at Fordham, depending on what can squeeze into her full-time School of American Ballet schedule. Her eye, though, is primarily on her professional career—if things go well, a B.A. will not be that important.

Kinstlinger admits that occasionally difficulties arise because of her religious practices. Once she danced Balanchine's *Jewels* in old point shoes—a very painful experience—rather than sew ribbons on a new pair on the Sabbath. Her colleagues have learned the nuances of being “Shabbos goyim” for her: they know that Kinstlinger is forbidden by Jewish law to ask directly for someone to turn on the dressing room lights for her on a Friday evening, and that she might say instead, “Gee, it’s getting kind of dark in here.”

Tours of the ballet company present challenges, too. When the company eats out, Kinstlinger practically goes into restau-

Kinstlinger describes herself as the most observant member. “My parents would support whatever I did,” she explains. “My observance is more to satisfy myself than them.”

Still, there were problems when she first began taking classes in Manhattan while living with her parents in New Jersey. How could she take the School of American Ballet’s required Saturday class and still remain observant? “Since I couldn’t use transportation on the Sabbath, I asked a classmate who lived right across the street from the school if I could sleep on the floor in her room,” remembers Kinstlinger. It turned out that the friend’s father was a Mormon bishop, and the whole family was extremely supportive and did everything they could to help her. “They bought paper plates so I could keep kosher, made sure I had the right food—they were wonderful.” More recently, she has taken to spending Shabbos with the Landownes, the family of her former teacher from the Jewish Theological Seminary, who happen to live near the theater.

If she’s not performing on a Friday night, Kinstlinger goes to shul either at Lincoln Square or at the Spanish-Portuguese synagogue on 70th Street and Central Park West, then she joins the Landownes for their Sabbath meal. If she is expected at the theater, she says the bracha [blessing] over the Sabbath candles that hang on her dressing table mirror, completes the performance, and walks back to the Landownes’ apartment for a late Shabbos supper. Saturday morning she

ger

Shabbos in the Corps de Ballet

rant kitchens to see how the food is prepared. Back home with the company, she asks not to be cast during major Jewish holidays, and her requests are honored.

From the beginning, however, Kinstlinger accepted her “two worlds” as presenting positive challenges rather than obstacles. “Ballet and religious observance both require discipline; I learned about the former from the latter. In a sense, I feel that I’m living a paradox,” she continues. “I make all my own rules, yet I’m also very carefully following all the rules set forth for me, in Judaism and in ballet.”

“Many observant people would feel that dancing on the Sabbath [or wearing an immodest tutu] is a religious infraction, but I don’t. I feel that God gave me this talent to dance—this is God’s plan for me. I couldn’t be in this company if I refused to dance on Saturday, and if I wasn’t in this company it would be an injustice, both to me and to God’s will.”

One of three children raised in a modern Orthodox family,

wakes up much earlier than she would otherwise in order to pray again at shul, then to ballet class, followed by afternoon and evening performances. “It’s hard to keep going on so little sleep,” says Kinstlinger, “but I’m willing to do it because I want the Sabbath to remain a holy day for me.”

If there is a conflict between the life of the spirit and the life of the body, Kinstlinger doesn’t experience it that way. “I don’t see that I have to choose one over the other; I can combine the two into a way of life that works for me,” she says, sitting in a New York coffee shop and thoughtfully sipping her freshly squeezed orange juice. “I was destined to do this. I never felt that dancing was work; it was always pure joy.” ■

If you want to see Dena Kinstlinger in action: She often dances in *Jewels*, *Who Cares?* and *Ballo della Regina*. She has also just been cast in a new, unnamed Peter Martins ballet. Balanchine’s *The Nutcracker*, in which she dances the role of a Snowflake in the *corps de ballet*, will be available soon on video.

What's white, forty feet long, and resembles a serpent, robe, placenta, Torah-scroll, chuppah and/or Tree of Life? If you're stumped, don't worry. Unless you're familiar with the extraordinary work of 58-year-old dancer/choreographer Fanchon Shur, you wouldn't guess that a mammoth tallit, or ritual prayer shawl, could be used in so

formed over twenty times at schools, synagogues, churches and concert stages across the country, those who witness Tallit have felt the pull of Shur's potent imagery. Says Catherine Keller, a theology professor at Drew University, "In its joyful release and fierce purity, this dancing surpasses any other dancing I've ever been part of. It was hard to make us stop at all—we might all of us, women and men, old ones and children, have danced to the point of collapse, if not gently calmed and spiraled together into a single Tree of Life."

Part of the power of Shur's work stems from her feminism, which is both radical and concrete. In Tallit she uses the symbol of a garment that was (and still is, in many circles) exclusively male, aggressively enacting new meanings for the symbol in order to include those outside its scope: Women. Says Shur: "Once my eyes were opened by feminist analysis, the traditional religious forms, with their message of female infe-

Fanchon

Shur

Ceremonial Warrior

many innovative ways.

As the central motif of her two-hour ceremonial dance called Tallit,

Shur's prayer shawl is a

forty foot square of silky, knit fab-

ric. In the hands of the dancers, this oversized cloth undergoes many transformations, including becoming a child, a wall, and an umbilical cord. As the dance recapitulates life's journey, the spectators are invited to join in. Gone are the distinct boundaries that separate performers from audience. According to Shur, Tallit is "a movement prayer that turns the theater into a sanctuary and an audience into a sacred community."

The response to Shur's work has been overwhelming; per-

riority, became sources of pain rather than healing. But as I attempt to make a fresh start by creating new symbols and rituals, I try to speak to our deepest selves, to create something that resonates with shared, inclusive meanings."

Born in 1935 in Chicago, Fanchon derived her name from a vaudeville dancer much admired by her mother. Reared in a non-religious, culturally Jewish, single-parent household in Los Angeles, she experienced the founding of the State of Israel in 1948 as an event that pivotally raised her Jewish consciousness. Eventually her kindled Jewish identification led her to Israeli folk dancing, which Shur describes as "a radical act, filled with women leaping and striding, women reveling in their own strength and power." Her passion for dancing didn't wane, even as a student at UCLA, and she left school in her third year to pursue a dance career in earnest.

TWO DANCERS WHO ARE LIVING THEIR DREAMS

While still a student, Shur married a young man she met in her chemistry class; by the time she was 24, her first child had been born. "Motherhood was filled with conflicts for me," she confesses. "I was just emerging as an artist. It was hard." The birth of a second child made it harder still. When an Israeli composer named Bonia Shur moved across the street, Fanchon's marriage was already in trouble. And when she and Bonia began collaborating (he was now writing the music for her dances), she could no longer deny her feelings for him. She left her husband and married Bonia, with whom she had two more children, as well as raising the two from Bonia's first marriage. Needless to say, raising six children made for alterations in her dreams and career.

Fanchon was teaching movement at the religious school in a local synagogue (where her husband had been commissioned to compose a concert of Jewish music) when she was asked to choreograph an evening event. "That was how I actively started using my own dancing and choreography to tap into my Jewish roots," she explains. Then, while she and her husband were teaching at SWIG (a well-known Jewish camp in Saratoga, California) in the mid-1960s, Fanchon met a fabric artist with whom she developed a rapport. The two decided to collaborate on a project, and the result was the very first performance of Tallit, done with a 50 x 80 piece of muslin. "Muslin doesn't stretch," says Shur. "It doesn't give. So the first incarnation of Tallit was very angular and geometric." Bonia created the sound track, and a photographer friend took pictures of the dancers which were then blown up and projected onto a screen during the performance. "When we had finished, there was an ovation," Fanchon remembers. She's been dancing Tallit, with various modifications and transformations, ever since.

In her thirty-year career, Shur has choreographed over 100 pieces, including Lullaby, a dance film with an anti-nuclear message, and dances for Revolt in Mode'in, an ABC/TV production. She helped create the New Dance Theater in Los Angeles, and, later, Dance Theater Seattle. (Her husband had become the music director at the de Hirsch/Sinai Temple in that city.) Shur and her husband continue to do much collaborative, mutually supportive work. Currently, Bonia is the director of liturgical arts at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, while Fanchon has started the Cincinnati-based Growth in Motion Center and the Fanchon Shur Ceremonial Dance Company, an intergenerational dance troupe whose members range in age from their 20s to their 50s, and whose physiques and ages challenge the idea that dance is the exclusive domain of the slender and

young.

More and more, Shur is interested in the potential of dance as therapeutic ritual. She is certified as a movement psychotherapist, and is supervised by a psychologist. Recently, at the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education's annual conference (which this year addressed issues of sexuality), Shur led ceremonial dance performances (called "God is the Roaring Blaze" and "The Uneasy Grace of Sexuality") in which 500 priests, pastors and ministers, each carrying two fire-colored scarves, entered a huge ballroom in silence (as an African drum ensemble played), and joined in chanting and choreographed movements. Shur calls these inspiring pieces "congregational prayer through motion and sound."

Conceptually, Shur sees her work continuing to grow and evolve. "Embodying and transcending are irrepressibly linked," she says. "My goal is to use movement to make embodiment and transcendence function like a hologram—where you can see the whole picture of life." ■

Fanchon Shur



PHOTO BY MICHAEL BENNETT SHUR

PROFIL

TALENT
BANK

Three feminists working in Jewish education share some of their insights, accomplishments and ambitions with Susan Weidman Schneider. To submit your own professional and biographical data to LILITH's Talent Bank, please use the form on the inside cover. In upcoming issues, LILITH will profile women experts in other fields.

Sara Rudich-Prager, 42
Potomac, Maryland

In addition to her full-time job as Middle School Judaic Studies Head and Director of Admissions for Krieger Schechter Day School in Baltimore, Sara Rudich-Prager is

teaching a three-year curriculum for adult Jewish women, and helping Orthodox women learn to read Torah in her own synagogue.



"Education is a passion with me—it's beyond the career, the job, or even the Jewish feminist part of me. I see Jewish education as organically whole, from

family education projects to a 4-week course I'm now teaching on women and Judaism for the parents of kids in my school. Some parents came in the door because the day school offered a full-day kindergarten, for example, and then the whole family is transformed by the experience.

"I always looked for opportunities to work with adults even while I was teaching children and raising my own sons (ages 16, 13, 8). I first got an M.A. in general education, then spent time in Israel. I was able to integrate who I was by going into Jewish education—first early childhood and then teaching young adults at Brandeis-Bardin Institute in California, a pivotal experience.

"One of the most fascinating things was teaching adult Bat Mitzvah students in Rockland County, New York. In eight years I had over 100 graduates. During the course their perceptions of themselves as Jewish women and the way they made decisions about Jewish life for their families changed—for instance, deciding to send their kids to Jewish day schools. The two-year course became three years or four. Jewish learning became part of their own lives."

What in her own life made her involve herself so completely in Jewish education?

"I had a very positive Jewish education. I felt comfortable in my after-school Hebrew school and Hebrew high school. Students from the Jewish Theological Seminary taught us, and I felt that these people were serious.

"But even I was unprepared when I left for college. I said to friends, 'I can't marry someone who isn't Jewish'—and I couldn't explain why. I realized I'd better learn more about this. I started to take Judaic studies courses at Tufts in

ES

the late '60's, and that changed my life. Leaving home, kids need to learn to *articulate* why it's important to be Jewish.

What are some of the crystallizing moments for women and for girls?

"Life cycle events offer particular openings—baby namings, for example, where the families ask themselves, 'What do we want for this child? Where do we want to go?'"

"One of my adult students became engaged, and other students in the class created a havdalah ceremony to mark the transition from one phase to another. Teaching about Judaism is like teaching a language, a means of expression, and then people can use it in their own lives.

"In the middle school, at prayers, girls who are given *tallitot* for Bat Mitzvah are not wearing them. They were first told, if you're going to lead *t'filla* you must wear a *tallit*—then told it was optional. Who chooses to do it? Why? And why not? We are planning some small-group discussions with sixth and seventh graders on this complicated political and ritual issue. Nobody has looked at this before with the young people it affects.

"We're going to have a *t'fillin* lab, where everyone will learn how to put on the phylacteries. No matter what their own practice will be, at least the girls will have the opportunity for hands-on experience."

Audrey Friedman Marcus, 62
Denver, Colorado

A publisher of Jewish educational materials for children and adults that are attractive and hip enough to look like texts and workbooks from the real world, Audrey Friedman Marcus is curriculum consultant for the religious school of Temple Sinai, a Reform congregation in Denver, and executive vice president of Alternatives in Religious Education (A.R.E.) Publishing, which she helped found twenty years ago.

"During the school revolution of the '60's nothing was going on in Jewish education! There were no creative materials for religious schools. So we produced them. Rabbi Ray Zwerin and I wrote the materials and mailed the first brochures ourselves. We now have 150 titles and a warehouse full of inventory.

"We worked hard to be non-sexist in language and approach. We reformulated some of the Hebrew so that it wasn't so sexist. Conscious of the male orientation of most prayers, we're writing *Teaching T'filla*, with exercises where males and females try different ritual



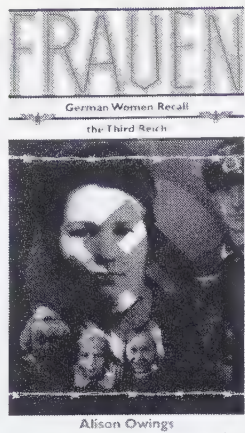
roles so that students experience each other's point of view, even if these aren't regularly available in their own synagogue or denomination.

"I came from a rather non-observant Reform home, but very synagogue-oriented. My most significant role models were men—my father, who was president of our congregation, and my rabbi, who first asked me to teach. My rabbi knew I'd be good at it, although at that point I didn't even have a college degree. He gave me a reading program of about 200 books! I began reading and learning, and then earned a B.A. and M.A. in education at Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles.

"A shaping moment for me was being the only Jew at a Quaker boarding school. The administrators wouldn't let me miss the Quaker meeting to listen to a radio Rosh Hashanah service so I got up at the meeting and said that Jews all over the world were praying for peace, and we should be doing that too. I just found myself on my feet—the Quakers believe that you are 'called' to speak—and that was the moment I announced myself publicly as a Jew.

"We teach the kids intensively for one whole week every summer, modeled on the Christian summer Bible schools. We have their undivided attention, six hours a day for five days. It's mandatory for grades one through seven in our religious school, and about 80% come. Each grade has a different curriculum, with art, songs, projects, guest lectures; it's very interactive.

"But even with a wonderful program like this one, if there's no follow-up at home the best materials are of little value. You have to get families involved, even minimally, in learning with their kids—the life cycle, holiday cycle, Israel, Holocaust. The factors I think turn parents off are a lack of time, their own scanty Jewish knowledge and a certain rebelliousness. Many think Judaism is oppressive, dull, not too meaningful. A lot react against their own bad Jewish education, and they transmit this to the kids, sometimes unconsciously."



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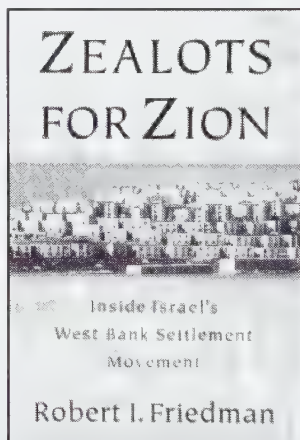
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Elaine S. Cohen, 47

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Educational director of the United Talmud Torah Schools, an umbrella for two elementary and two high schools in Montreal's complex mix of French and English para-public schools, Elaine S. Cohen oversees professional and curriculum development, and formal and informal educational activities, a job which for eighteen years was occupied by an Orthodox rabbi. Before coming to Montreal, she organized retreats for teachers in Jewish schools through the Melton Institute at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

"In elementary school, prayer is egalitarian, but with no consciousness. Girls may lead, but it's just seen as 'taking turns.' In the high schools, prayer is optional; there are morning prayers, and the only ones who go are boys. When we moved here, my daughters went to prayers the first day. The teacher asked, 'Did somebody die?'"

"The French-track schools (two of the four) are very multicultural: Ethiopian, Russian, Latin American, European, Israeli—demonstrating how our own community has many faces.

"I myself went to a secular after-school Jewish program as a kid where Yiddish was the language. My formative religious experiences were informal, through the *havurah* movement, where small groups socialized and davened and learned together. The Jewish Feminist Conference in New York in 1973 was the first time I'd gone to a Shabbat service and heard exclusively women's voices. Women were asking my questions—about equal participation and women's experiences in the Bible.

"I wonder about the second generation of *havurah* Jews. I'm not sure we've done our jobs all that well. The sons who are highly identified tend to become Orthodox. The daughters tend to move far away from a Jewish involvement, or they stay highly involved in Jewish feminism.

"As for curriculum, the things that spoke to kids twenty years ago do not today. Money is going into adult 'mini-schools' or Israel experiences or informal education, but these programs do little preparation and no follow-up.

"Creative energy has to be put back into day schools. If I had thousands of dollars I'd do team building and faculty enrichment, having teachers in Jewish schools work on the meaning of Judaism in their own lives. We use the language of community, but we don't know how to build community." ■



Emma Goldman and the American Left: Nowhere at Home
by Marion J. Morton (Twayne
Publishers: NY, 1992) 183 pages,
\$14.95 paper

Marion J. Morton's central premise in *Emma Goldman and the American Left* is simple. Goldman, a refugee from Lithuania and Russia, and a deportee (because of her political activism) from her adopted United States, was a woman without a country. Yet her affiliation with left-wing causes connected her with a variety of feminist, anti-war and people's movements and gave her a way to be a part of communities the world over. "Faced with the common enemies of injustice and repression," Morton concludes, "Goldman took her place with others on the left: Standing together, arms linked, joining in 'We Shall Not Be Moved.'"

Oddly enough, Goldman herself, who lived from 1869 to 1940, was less certain about her place and role; Morton describes her as enigmatic, pushed by contradictory impulses and desires. Ideologically committed to anarchism—which she defined as a system that placed "the center of gravity in society in the individual; that [sic] must think for himself, act freely, and live fully," she often saw little reason to believe that people would do the right thing. But that was hardly that only contradiction in Goldman's life. An opponent of the Bolsheviks, she sold her critiques to bourgeois American publications, and was assailed by other leftists as a turncoat, an agent whose words became tools of the ruling classes. Thick-skinned and headstrong, she was also a feminist and an ardent supporter of birth control. Nonetheless, she eschewed Margaret Sanger, a leader in the field, and essentially did her own, parallel organizing.

Goldman's personal life was no less complex. While cavalierly taking lovers who were decades younger, or married, she nevertheless rued her inability to

sustain a long-term romance. Ben Reitman and Sasha Berkman, her most significant partners, and other less notable players, figure prominently in Morton's account, but Goldman is portrayed as essentially alone in her day-to-day battles.

The context in which Goldman played out her passionate personal and political entanglements—the myriad ups and downs within the U.S. left and the rivalries between various anarchist and Communist factions—give *Emma Goldman and the American Left* a unique spin, and make for fascinating reading.

In documenting Goldman's life and times, Morton has presented one of the world's most chutzpah-driven women. Fully human, and not always likable, Emma is nonetheless an inspiring reminder that political and cultural progress are inseparable. As she put it: "If I can't dance, I don't want to be a part of your revolution."

—Eleanor J. Bader

Why Do Men Like War

***Gendering War Talk*, edited by Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott (Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, 1993) 335 pages, \$49.50 hardcover, \$14.95 paper**

***Nationalisms and Sexualities*, edited by Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer and Patricia Yaeger (Routledge, Chapman & Hall: New York, NY, 1991) 451 pages, \$55.00 hardcover, \$16.95 paper**

"After biological reproduction," write Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott in the introduction to *Gendering War Talk*, "war is perhaps the arena where division of labor along gender lines has seemed the most absolute and natural. The separation of 'front' and 'homefront' has not only been the consequence of war but has also

been used as its justification."

In 13 groundbreaking essays, *Gendering War Talk* deconstructs the meanings of armed conflict throughout the 20th century. From Nazi Germany to World War I Britain, from 1980's Guatemala to the armed phase of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), from the Lebanese civil war to the 1992 war in the Persian Gulf, representations of war in political discourse, film, literature and news media are analyzed and dissected.

The monumental Holocaust film, *Shoah*, for example, blots out the experiences of women completely, or nearly completely. According to Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer, authors of "Gendered Translations: Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*," "It is clear that Lanzmann's general discomfort and uneasiness concerning discussions of distinctions—his resolute unwillingness to contemplate and explore differences among the victims in *Shoah*—is most vehement when it comes to gender. Encounters with women threaten whatever precarious emotional distance, whatever control and denial of feelings [the men interviewed] had established in order to survive."

Other representations depict women as keening mourners, forever devastated by the loss of a son, brother, lover, husband, friend or other relative. Still others—even recent others—portray us as brave, loyal helpmates, waiting at home for a return to normalcy, heterosexual coupling and childbearing.

Gendering War Talk questions stereotypes about war's impact on women and men: "Is a soldier a soldier if he is afraid, weak and vulnerable?" asks Miriam Cooke in "Wo-man, Retelling the War Myth." Which qualities make war universal, and which belong to the country and culture in which the conflict is waged? Why do men seem to prefer violent means of conflict resolution over sit-down debates or protracted, mediated negotiations?

In "Towards a Feminist Peace Process" philosopher Sara Ruddick offers an explanation of war's masculinity. "In

REVIEWS

extraordinary circumstances," she writes, "soldiers must control ordinary emotions of fear, rage and desire. Understandably, many rage against absent women and the emotionality they represent. They may also blame women for their own longings for women that allegedly divert them from soldierly duty, thereby endangering them and their comrades. In this strained emotional ambiance of danger and separation, commanders often encourage 'masculine' aggressive impulses. Given this encouragement and the pressures to which their 'normal masculine' defenses are subject, it is not surprising if many soldiers imaginatively elaborate or actually engage in rapes or assaults on women."

Ruddick's analysis is extended by writer and philosopher Klaus Theweleit, who posits a theory that is at first blush implausible, but which is later bolstered by facts that are hard to dismiss. "In trivializing women's birthing labor," he writes, "men got used to claiming for themselves a higher creativity. Men want to be the products of their own labor. They don't want to be born by mothers. From Plato to Goebbels, men called that way of birth 'the wrong way.'"

To buttress this claim, Theweleit reports on the creation of the first hydrogen bomb. Saluted as a "newborn baby," he states that the bomb was cooed over as a miracle of life. In addition, Edward Teller was lauded as "the mother who carried the baby," a creator needing neither womb nor egg.

Writer Carol Cohn concurs that "the entire history of the bomb project seems permeated with imagery that confounds man's overwhelming technological power to destroy nature with the power to create." Indeed, "the bomb is male progeny," writes Theweleit. "Males give birth to wonderful explosions. What he sees is not a bomb exploding. What he sees is the birth of a new world."

The erotic underpinnings of armed conflict were nowhere more explicit than in North American representations of the

Gulf War. Cartoon after cartoon depicted Saddam Hussein bending over forward as the U.S. stuck it to him from behind. "Over and over defeat for the Iraqis was portrayed as humiliating anal penetration by the more powerful and manly United States," writes Carol Cohn in "War, Wimps and Women."

The sexualization of war has gone hand-in-hand with the depersonalizing of modern warfare. Since World War II, writes Stanley D. Rosenberg in "The Threshold of Thrill," "Acronyms are used

"Men trivialize women's birthing labor while saluting the bomb as their own progeny."

whenever possible, and the sensual pleasures of the experience are emphasized."

But to what end? Why do war stories continue to titillate and intrigue? Why do we allow ourselves to be placated with acronyms and euphemisms that distance us from reality? What political beliefs make war seem inevitable? How do nationalist ideologies and racism interface with gendered representations of warfare and conflict?

The 23 articles in this second book here reviewed. *Nationalisms and Sexualities*—a multicultural, interdisciplinary anthology of largely academic essays, address these and many other questions. Heavily reliant on literary presentations of cultural norms, the book looks at anti-colonial struggles, feminist movements and both mainstream and

alternative culture.

The book opens with an analysis of Walt Disney's *Three Caballeros*, a 1945 movie meant "to carry a message of democracy and friendship below the Rio Grande." Yet the boundaries of friendship needed to be explicit, and author Julianne Burton describes the equally important message about sexual propriety that the film presented to Mexico. "The Disney team apparently felt the need to reassure their Latin American counterparts that they need feel no threat to their sexual hegemony from this North American neighbor, who, for all quacking up and cracking up, is clearly incapable of shacking up."

Such boundaries have not always been as clear. In the late 19th century, for example, a mass migration of European women to Argentina saw thousands of previously "respectable" European women become sex workers as soon as they left their hearth and home. According to Donna J. Guy, the enormity of the problem was hugely embarrassing for European society, where the idea of prostitution-as-choice was inconceivable. "In one way or another these women must have been trapped and victimized. So European women in foreign bordellos were construed as 'white slaves,' rather than common prostitutes, and the campaign to rescue them became a glorious battle pitting civilization and home against barbarism beyond," she writes.

While South America was surely "beyond," so was Asia, and Ketu H. Katrak offers an intriguing look at the sexual politics of Gandhi and the impact his politics had on Indian women. In her essay, Katrak looks at the practice of passive resistance. While this strategy "feminized the usually masculinist struggle against the colonizer," she writes, Gandhi also incorporated a notion of femininity that saw women "as the embodiment of sacrifice and non-violence." Harkening back to ancient tales of Rama and Krishna, he helped perpetuate a mythology of passive female sexuality. As a result, she

autions readers to learn by India's example: "When sexuality and spirituality merge, women are socialized into absorbing sexuality within a spiritual realm, leaving behind the realms of the physical, of desire, of pleasure."

Singapore provides another example of the interconnectedness between sexual politics and nationalist honor. In that country, the state's role in controlling reproduction, and by extension female sexuality, has been extremely overt. Throughout the last decade, the country's Chinese population has dwindled, while Malays and Indians have stepped up their reproduction. Hysteria has ensued, and the impending collapse of the social and economic order has been blamed on an unruly, destabilizing and irresponsible

feminine sexuality." Not surprisingly, Chinese women have been ordered to do their national duty: Produce children.

Nationalisms and Sexualities opens the door to a number of other compelling discussions. Some describe social constructions of femininity while others debate the relationship between social policies and concepts of nationhood. While some of the essays may be difficult reading for a non-academic audience, taken together with *Gendering War Talk*, *Nationalisms and Sexualities* provides an important range of womanist viewpoints on the intersections and overlaps of race, class and gender on cultural life, notions of nation and nationality, and the politics of war and peace.

—Eleanor J. Bader

"Kitchen Torah"

When we really begin to fathom that we are part of the Sacred Law of Reciprocity—that that which eats is later eaten—we can then truly reclaim eating, and cooking, as great holy acts of devotion. Certainly Grandmother Molly's cooking is as religious an experience as anything that transpires on a bimah. This is from *Devotion: A Memoir* by Miriam Levine (University of Georgia Press, 1993, \$29.95):

During the Jewish holidays, as my grandmother Molly performed the most extravagant pieces from her culinary repertoire, she would be attended by her children. They were geniuses of protocol and decorum. They had the seriousness of the men at shul, who assisted the rabbi by pointing to the place in the text. They would hand her a spoon; they would hold the bowl as she mixed . . . They were given over to her; they forgot themselves. Their faces were attentive, absorbed, and contented like the students in my poetry workshop who are able to appreciate fine work and assist. They were not like the transported audiences at rock concerts, clapping and raising their hands, swaying to the music: they never confused their roles with the queen's, yet somehow they shared the gift.

At the end of my grandmother's culinary feats, my father would usually be called in. He was thought to have the best palate in the family. He would stand quietly poised before the pot on the stove, holding the clean tablespoon his mother had just handed him,

collecting himself, gearing down as if he were still a basketball player about to shoot from the foul line.

I'd watch my father as he carefully dipped the spoon into the pot, bending forward from the waist. He'd throw back his head and roll the broth across his tongue. They'd all wait for his advice. The most difficult flavor to achieve was the complicated balance of sweet and sour of the cabbage soup. So they'd add and add and get it right.

Sarah Orne Jewett posted Flaubert's advice over her desk: "Write about ordinary life as if you were writing history." The motto above my grandmother's stove might have read: Reduction is the essence of taste.

And form was the cup that held flavor. None of my grandmother Molly's creations outlived her. She never thought about whether they would or not. Molly created; we feasted until nothing was left. Jewett's and Flaubert's work will also disappear, but, of course, more slowly.

Hers was the passion to get things right, to shape, to plump, to reduce, to dazzle, to thicken, to boil, to clarify and complicate and create. Her art was not separated from the life of the body; she made beauty to taste, to wear, to wear out. While her children tended her, she whirled her needles, counting stitches with a rapidity that I could not follow.

She cut, she carved, she shaped. Even her throwaways were beautiful. The long, unbroken coil of red apple skin lined with the thinnest layer of white flesh fell from her small sharp knife.

—Susan Schnur

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A resource center for New York women, opened in 1992, assists women and organizations that serve them with information, networking, a library, files of women-owned businesses, and a monthly calendar of women-related events. General membership, \$35; patrons, \$100. *The Women's Resource Center of New York, Inc.* 2315 Broadway, #306, New York, NY 10024. (212)875-8533.

The Dance Library of Israel is the largest in the world after New York's Lincoln Center. Founded in 1975, it houses a catalogued collection of books, slides, recordings of classical and ethnic dance on film and videotape, photographs, and dance memorabilia, and is a resource for dancers, teachers,

dance therapists, choreographers, musicians and historians. Visit: *Dance Library of Israel*, 26 Bialik St. 65241, Tel Aviv, ISRAEL. (03)658106. Contribute: *The International Committee for the Dance Library of Israel*, 890 Broadway, #7A, New York, NY 10003. (212)475-1883.

BODY/POLITIC

Women's Health Matters is a campaign by the American Social Health Association dedicated to the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, which are contracted by 12 million Americans each year. A free brochure, "How to Talk to Your Doctor About Sexual Health" is available from (800)972-8500. Hotlines also operated by *ASHA for AIDS*, (800)342-2437; *TDD Service for the Deaf* (800)243-7889;

STD Hotline (800)227-8922; *National Herpes Hotline* (919)361-8488.

Resources to help cope with illness and death: *For Families of the Jewish Terminally Ill*; *At Bedside: Insights into Visiting the Sick* and *The Jewish Orphaned Adult*, (each booklet \$3.00). On audiocassette is *Strategies for Jewish Care: Insights into the Care of the Seriously Ill and Their Families* (\$18.00 for a 2-tape package), and a free leaflet is *How to Console*. All available from *National Institute For Jewish Hospice, Publications Dept.*, 247 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way, #21, Palm Springs, CA 92262. A nationwide telephone counseling help and referral service of the *NIJH* 1-800-446-4448.

Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice is the new name of the former Religious

Coalition for Abortion Rights. Its mission has expanded to promote dialogue in congregations, and to encourage individuals to advocate—as religious people—for comprehensive reproductive health care. *Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice*, 100 Maryland Ave., NE #307, Washington, DC 20002-5625. (202)543-7032, FAX (202) 543-7820.

PEACE WORK

The Abraham Fund provides grants to many of the more than 300 organizations in Israel that work for Jewish/Arab coexistence. An example: a leadership training program for Jewish and Arab women health professionals to enable them to advocate together for change in the Israeli health-care system. A free videotape highlights projects supported by the fund,

THE ARTS

The ideal woman, according to the acrostic from Proverbs is interpreted by 32 contemporary artists from the USA and Israel in the Yeshiva University Museum exhibit *Aishet Hayil*. A Woman of Valor, on display through June 1994. *Yeshiva University Museum*, 2520 Amsterdam Ave., New York, NY 10033. (212)960-5390.



"Strength and Majesty are her clothing" —An Abundance of Spirit by Ellen Eichel

Truth tellers: Jewish Women in Jewish Song are celebrated by Laura Wetzler in Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino and English, with guitar and Yemenite drum accompaniment. Songs of garment workers, teachers, lovers, resistance fighters, the woman who hates to cook, the Jewish matriarch, and lullabies. *Nervy Girl Productions*, 557 Union St. #2, Brooklyn, NY 11215. (718)596-5725.

The American Society for the Cameri Theatre supports Israel's landmark repertory company, which produces classics and contemporary Israeli dramas. In a field dominated by men, the Cameri has produced several plays by women (Shulamit Lapid, Ruby Shoval Porat—see LILITH Fall 1993—and soon Savion Librecht) and plays dealing with women's issues. Simultaneous English and Russian translation at selected showings. The company often tours outside Israel. *Aaron Ziegelman, American Society for the Cameri Theatre*, 15 E. 26 St. #1915, New York, NY 10010. (212)468-2773..



Orna Porat (r.) and Na'ama Shapira in "Sheindele" about a powerful, embittered rebbetzin who leads her community following the death of her husband. Performed at the Cameri Theatre.

EDUCATION

Custom Made Education Packets on Jewish feminist issues: LILITH will create packets of back issues of the magazine on a theme of your choosing which we are happy to offer at a reduced price to participants/students in your college course, adult education class, women's group. Some suggested topics might be: women in the Holocaust and Resistance movement; new women's rituals & celebrations; health as a feminist issue; Jewish women in the arts, including fiction & poetry; women in Israel; women in the Jewish family. *LILITH*, 250 West 57th St., New York, NY 10107.

Jewish student groups on college campuses can apply for grants for publications, social actions projects, feminist retreats, and political education. Priority is given to innovative programs, demonstration projects, outreach efforts and activities serving a wide constituency. Groups may apply—at least two months prior to need—for amounts up to \$500. *Brenda Gevirtz*, *North American Jewish Students Appeal*, 165 Pidgeon Hill Rd., Huntington Station, NY 11746-4511. (516)385-8771, FAX (516)385-8772.

Families learn together during the summer at Ulpan Akiva, where students include Israelis, tourists, temporary residents, new immigrants, Jews and non-Jews, civil servants, teachers on sabbatical, and students of all ages. Parents and teenagers learn Hebrew or Arabic, five hours a day, while younger children join a nearby day camp. *Ulpan Akiva*, P.O.B. 6086, 42160 Netanya, Israel. 972-53-352312, FAX 972-53-652919.

Women on Campus, a quarterly newsletter, addresses campus climate, the academic workplace, women in the curriculum, student life, sexual harassment and assault, gender issues, women's colleges, women's leadership, and includes job openings, conferences, publications, workshops, and fellowships. Subscriptions \$20 per year. *The National Association of Women in Education*, 1325 18th St. NW, #210, Washington DC 20036-6511. (202)659-9330.

Awards for Women's Research relevant to the education and personal and professional development of women and girls will be given—a \$750 honorarium each—to a graduate student and to a person at any career/professional level. Research may be historical, philosophical, experimental, evaluative or descriptive. *National Association of*

Women in Education, *Women's Awards Committee*, Mary E. Abrams Jefferson Community College SW, 1000 Community College Dr., Louisville, KY 40272. (502)935-9840.

New Generations, an initiative of the New Israel Fund, educates progressive Jews in their 20's and 30's about social justice issues in Israel and hopes to cultivate future leaders and donors. Local committees develop programs of study and discussion groups, community events, outreach to synagogues and *havurot*, and special fundraising projects. Minimum annual (tax deductible) contribution \$36.00; \$18.00 for students. Send in names of others you think might be interested. Contact: in Boston, *Andrea Hodas* (617)969-2056; in New York, *Marcia Resnicoff* (212)302-0066; in Washington, DC, *Susan Bandler* (202)223-3333 or *New Israel Fund/ New Generations*, 1101 15th St., NW, #304, Washington DC 20005.

The Melton Catalog, published annually, offers materials suitable for families and useful for individuals teaching their children in small towns with no local Jewish school. *Melton Research Center for Jewish Education*, 3080 Broadway, New York, NY 10027. (212)678-8031.

which was founded in 1989 by an B. Slifka and Eugene Weiner. Tax deductible contributions to *Abraham Fund*, 477 Madison Ave. New York, NY 10022-1570. (800)301-FUND..

Funds to assist in relief efforts for the former Yugoslavia are being collected by *American Jewish World Service-Bosnia Relief Fund*, 15 West 26th St., New York, NY 10010. (212)683-1161.

BE AN ANGEL

documentary exploring the lives of women rabbis *Shekhina*, the Feminist Presence of God" by filmmaker Shoshie Krongold, requires funding for completion. Featuring Einat Ramon, an

Israeli based in Berkeley, CA, performing the first Bat Mitzvah in St. Petersburg; Margaret Holub, working with the homeless in Los Angeles and leading a rural community in Northern California; Linda Holtzman of Philadelphia, the first woman rabbi to have her own congregation, performing a newborn girl naming ceremony; Shoni Labowitz, from a family of Orthodox rabbis, leading a weekend experience in mystical Judaism in South Florida; and other rabbis at a Women's Rabbinical Network retreat. Hold a benefit screening of a rough cut of the film at your home or office; groups raising \$200 or more will be listed in the credits; tax deductible contributions to Film Arts Foundation/Shekhina Project; or purchase the documentary on

completion. *Shekhinah*, 726 37th Ave., San Francisco, CA 94121. (415)666-3075.

Why women choose Orthodox Judaism is explored in "Ba'alot Teshuva: The Return of Sarah's Daughters" by filmmaker Marcia Jarmel, who is seeking funds to match a grant from the California Humanities Council. Tax deductible contributions to the Film Arts Foundation/Baalot Teshuva. *Marcia Jarmel*, 735 11 Avenue #3, San Francisco CA 94118. (415)387-5912.

YOUR TALENT NEEDED

Call to artists: for a juried show "Jewish Visions by Women Artists" to be exhibited at UJA Federation in New York

City in the Fall of 1994, in honor of LILITH Magazine's 18th anniversary, send an SASE for specifications to *Jewish Women's Art Exhibit*, UJA Federation, 130 E. 59th St., #447, New York, NY 10022.

Experts from North America interested in meeting with colleagues in Israel—in fields such as civil rights, domestic violence, rape counseling, bilingual education, TESL, community organization, fundraising, media—are invited to contact a technical assistance project helping Israeli nonprofit organizations working for social change. *Brenda Needle*, *Coordinator of Volunteers*, *Shatil*, 9 Yad Harutzim St., 93420 Jerusalem, Israel. 972-2-723597, FAX 972-2-735149. —compiled by Naomi Danis

PASSOVER: The four girls within us

by Ruth Berger Goldston



Four girls dwell within us.

WISE GIRLS

At times, we are wise girls, strong and confident in what we know and in who we are, curious and eager to learn more, seeing clearly through tangled and complex dilemmas and able to make wise and appropriate decisions for ourselves and on behalf of others. Yet, as wise girls, we risk growing complacent in our knowledge, smug in the "superior" wisdom of the status quo, and so caught up in the pursuit of learning and producing that we neglect others around us and our own well-being.

WICKED GIRLS

At other times, we are wicked girls: angry, rebellious, critical, and negative. We set ourselves apart from our community, feeling, perhaps, that we don't belong and not understanding that it is we, not others, who place ourselves on the outside. Yet it is as wicked girls that we are able to see our world from another perspective, to see that sometimes "the Emperor wears no clothes," and to speak up and criticize what is wrong and what is unjust.

SIMPLE GIRLS

At times, we are simple girls, relaxed and playful, enjoying life without questioning, analyzing, or examining deeply, loving others with passion that cannot be expressed in words, and being loved in return without any logic or reason. Yet, as simple girls, we risk missing the color and texture of our complex universe, and we may forfeit the opportunity to contribute to *tikkun olam*, the repair and healing of the world.

GIRLS WHO DON'T KNOW HOW TO ASK

At other times, we are girls who don't know how to ask, we don't understand, we find that we cannot speak the language of the people in our company, we are struck dumb by a profound or strange new experience, or we are fearful because nothing like this has ever happened to us before. If we can remain silent, and tolerate our fear and our inability to speak for a while, we may discover worlds of riches we couldn't possibly have imagined. But if our

fear paralyzes us, if we lose confidence and withdraw from the world, or if it is fear of others that silences us, we truly need to be brought out from our slavery "by a strong and mighty arm."

Each girl within us needs the other girls. The wise girl needs the forcefulness of the wicked, the playfulness of the simple, and the sense of wonder of the speechless one. The wicked needs the erudition of the wise, the self-acceptance of the simple, and the contemplative spirit of the speechless. The simple needs the diligence of the wise, the clear vision of the wicked, and the confusion of the speechless. And the one who is struck dumb needs the words of the wise, the shout of the wicked, and the song of the simple.

At different times, each of our girls appears: we are, in turn, interested and curious, frustrated and angry, calm and contented, sad and fearful. It is easy to praise the wise, scold the wicked, smile with the simple, and rescue the speechless. It is less easy to challenge the wise, to love and appreciate the wicked, to prod the simple, and to allow the dumb-struck to struggle with confusion. Another part of ourselves, the parent, must judge how each of our children is to be treated in turn, knowing when to attend and when to ignore, how best to encourage each girl's "special gifts" and discourage destructive tendencies.

All of these exist within us, sometimes in harmony and other times in cacophony. They also exist outside us, in our parents, siblings, children, friends and colleagues—the people in the world who are a multi-faceted mirror through which we see ourselves. Passover is a time of liberation from slavery.

May we all come to know and accept our own four girls, so that we can become whole and free.



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